

THE
Moral Library.

CONTAINING,

- I. PRINCIPLES OF VIRTUE AND MORALITY.
 - II. ON THE HAPPINESS OF THE LIFE TO COME.
 - III. ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.
-

B O S T O N :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY WILLIAM SPOTSWOOD,
NO. 55 MARLBOROUGH-STREET.

1796.



TO

BENJAMIN RUSH, M.D.

PHILADELPHIA.

THE FOLLOWING

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION

OF THIS

VOLUME,

IN TESTIMONY

OF THE HIGH ESTEEM HE ENTERTAINS FOR YOU,

IS, WITH ALL DEFERENCE,

INSCRIBED

BY YOUR MOST OBEDIENT

AND VERY HUMBLE SERVANT,

William Spotswood.

A 2

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PRINCIPLES
OF
Virtue and Morality;
OR,
ESSAYS AND MEDITATIONS
ON
VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY DAVID MACBRIDE, M.D.

MARK THE PERFECT MAN, AND BEHOLD THE
UPRIGHT; FOR THE END OF THAT
MAN IS PEACE.

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C O N T E N T S.

PRINCIPLES OF VIRTUE AND MORALITY.

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Advertisement.

THE Author of these ESSAYS and MEDITATIONS, was a layman of respectability, exemplary in his life, and eminent in his profession. He left no direct orders for making them public; but, it having been observed, that the works of some laymen (PASCHAL, BOYLE, NELSON, ADDISON, FORBES, JENYNS, &c.) on the side of religion, were more attended to and read with less prejudice, than those of many among the clergy:— with a fervent hope that this may tend to the same good purpose is the motive for its publication, and perhaps no period required such assistances more than the present age.

E L E G Y
ON THE
DEATH OF DOCTOR M^rBRIDE.

How still the eve!—not Zephyr wings its way,
While night creeps on, with solemn, gentle pace,
Spreading her sable curtain o'er the day,
And calls to rest all nature's busy race.

Tho' weak yon taper lights the humble cot,
It shows a bliss to palaces unknown;
Its tenants happy, though they've toilsome got
A scanty meal, beneath a tyrant's frown.

Yet sweet repast, the short and simple fare,
Not treasuring ills, which still on grandeur wait;
And sweet their rest, for guilty, thorny care
Flies their rough pillows, for the down of state.

O! blest serenity! how does the mind,
Ruffled by many a stormy, cutting blast,
Seek thy assuaging balm? then, Heav'n, be kind,
And make me humble, if content I taste.

But, hark!—now springs afresh the rising gale!
It rises still—though comes so tardy near,
As if from woe it bore some heavy tale,
Which fain wou'd backen from a friendly ear.

Still, still it swells; and, oh! prophetic mind!
From yonder sacred dome it wafts a knell,
Whose note yet strives to die upon the wind,
Lest the sad news too speedy it may tell.

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF DR. M'BRIDE.

Whoe'er thou art, who thus obedient gave
A fleeting life to unrelenting death;
May'st thou find bliss triumphant in the grave,
As sure as *Pæon*, when he yields his breath!

Pæon! what mean'st thou, Echo, to return [name?
With sadden'd voice, that much-lov'd honour'd
Sure nought betides him, that I now should mourn
A friend so dear to merit and to fame?

Ah! me!—why blaze those torches near the grove
Where dwells my friend;—and why that cry of
woe;

And what that crowd, that there so solemn move,
Say, gentle traveller, if the cause you know?

“And have the tidings not assail'd your ear,
“Which ache the heart of many a faithful breast?
“'Tis the sad burial of a man most dear,
“*Pæon* the wife, the honour'd, the caress'd.”

Pæon!—ye Powers, support me!—what, my friend,
Whose door now waits thy step!--of him bereav'd;
O cruel fate!--and could not Science lend
A hand to save him, whom so many sav'd?

Nor thou, Philosophy a life prolong,
Which so enrich'd thy deep-sought treasure'd store?
'Twas passing hard;—but I'll attend the throng
That wails a public loss, since he's no more.

'Tis done—He's now to native earth return'd,
As far as frail mortality departs;
But all his virtues shall be richly urn'd
Within the center of a thousand hearts.

EPITAPH ON DR. M'BRIDE.

Tho' the grav'd monument can little add
To keep alive a fame that has no end ;
Yet if 'tis rais'd above his clay-cold bed,
Bear it this tribute from a weeping friend.

E P I T A P H.

VIRTUE.

How sweet thy sleep, my votive son !
How true thy dream of future bliss !
Tho' Science claims thee for her own,
'Tis I that gain'd thee happiness.

FAME.

To spread afar be mine the joy ;
Thy name embrac'd by ev'ry wind :
My trump shall sound, O ! sweet employ !
The strength and graces of thy mind.

TIME.

And let me join, O Virtue !—Fame !
To fix your fav'rite's happy lot ;
I'll from oblivion save his name,
When million others are forgot.

I N O G I

O HUMAN LIFE !—how mutable, how vain !
How thy wide sorrows circumscribe thy joy ?
O sunny island, in a stormy main ;
A spot of azure, in a cloudy sky !

OF

RETIREMENT

FROM

BUSINESS.

SOME authors have beautifully described the charms of retirement, and the happiness of those who are masters of their own time, and can employ it in works and contemplations, suitable to the duty and dignity of a rational being, who must give an account of his actions.

Others again, better acquainted with the human heart, have declaimed warmly against retirement, appealing to daily experience, which shows, that all who quitted business, soon had reason to repent of their rashness, as having, in effect, condemned themselves to perpetual gloominess and melancholy.

As those authors have viewed retirement in different lights, we need not wonder that their sentiments about it are so different. There is no doubt, that

most of those who did retire from business, seem to have been discontented in retirement, and would gladly return to their former employments, could they return with decency ; but it is equally certain, that such unsteady minds have not previously considered how their time was to be filled up, and their thoughts employed in retirement, before they determined to relinquish their respective professions or occupations.

You please yourself, my dear friend, (as perhaps all men in business do) with the hopes of ease and recess in some period of your life ; give me leave, therefore, to offer my opinion of what may be previously necessary to make you happy in that situation.

No man ought to retire from business while he has youth and vigour to pursue it. If he retires thro' indolence, or voluptuousness, besides hurting himself, he is unjust to the community, which cannot subsist comfortably without the mutual labour and aid one of another : and if he retires from a motive of religion toward God, he leaves half the task unperformed for which he was sent into the world, by being useless to his neighbours.

On the other hand, an old man should not, through covetousness, choose to sink under the burden of his profession, rather than throw it aside ; but if his circumstances will give him leave, should decently make his retreat from the busy world, before his faculties are impaired, and he becomes the subject of censure or ridicule ; and especially, before it be too late to search and know his own heart ; which is a lesson hard-

er to learn, and more important, than perhaps he may imagine.

A man's circumstances ought to be independent before he pretends to quit business, either by being master of a large estate, which will enable him to live in affluence ; or, by levelling his mind to a moderate fortune, and by having such an absolute command over his appetites, that they shall not desire any gratification but what he can innocently and conveniently afford.

The masters of overgrown estates, got in business, rarely know when they have enough ; or, if ever they think of a retreat, it is too commonly from a vain affectation of spending in empty show, and inhospitable grandeur, a small part of what was amassed, perhaps, by rapine or parsimony. Such undisciplined minds can form no notion of a wise or virtuous retirement.

A man of a moderate fortune (for it is to such I write) has several things to consider with respect to himself, and to his connexions in life, before he ventures on retirement. He ought, in the first place, to be so far acquainted with his own heart, as to be fully satisfied that no seeds of covetousness lurk there, which may spring up to his disquiet ; lest, by throwing himself out of an employment, which added daily to his income, his equanimity should stagger, and he should become afraid of poverty, after his gain has run into other channels, and his repentance will avail him nothing. Let him never quit business whose heart is tainted with avarice, otherwise he will be-

come his family's tormentor, and his own ; and his frantic terrors of imaginary wants will be sure to poison every blessing that he possesses.

He must, in the next place, take especial care not to retire on account of any disgust or peevish humour, into which he has been thrown by disappointments or bad usage. If fretfulness should be his inducement to quit business, he must always continue on the fret, otherwise he will lose his relish for retirement. No wise man, surely, would build any important resolution upon a transient humour, which may soon change, and leave him to reflect with regret on his rash conduct, when perhaps it is too late to rectify his error.

He must, in the third place, consider, that it is not an easy matter to subdue old and stubborn habits. A round of business, in which an industrious man has moved, from morning to night, for many years, in which he knew how to employ every hour of his time, and often thought these hours too short ; such an habitual round, I say, must at last become natural to him. To be, therefore, abruptly thrown out of it by retirement, where every spring of action is altered or lost, must disconcert him, and prove irksome. If a man has not previously considered what he was about to do ; if he has not gradually weaned himself from his usual attachments ; and, above all, if he has not steadily resolved to fill up, with some new employment, every vacancy which the loss of his former business must make in his time, he will, like a fish out of water, pant after his natural element. Retirement will become like a prison to him ; he knows not how to em-

ploy his thoughts; and his mind will grow torpid through inaction. There is now no passion to rouse him, no present gain to allure him, no variety to engage his attention as formerly, and no pleasing intercourse with persons conversant in the same studies, or assiduous in the same pursuits, to soothe or relieve him. Every moment therefore feels tedious to him, and he falls insensibly into a dejection of spirits, which, by precluding the hopes of good, and magnifying the apprehensions of evil, renders him completely wretched. This is a rock that some wise and good men have struck on, though, by a little previous reflexion, it might have been easily avoided; for I was well acquainted with an old man retired from business, whose time was so regularly employed, that when any unusual occurrence broke in upon his little scheme, (as he called it) he thought himself obliged to quicken his diligence next day, in order to recover the hours he had lost by that interruption.

But besides judging deliberately of his power over his own appetites, passions and habits, a man must likewise attend to his connexions in life. If he has children, it is dangerous to quit business, because, in case of unforeseen misfortunes, they must be involved in his difficulties, though they have not his firmness to support them. If he has a wife, he should never retire without her deliberate approbation of his design, and without an equal disposition in her to contentment and resignation in all events: for suppose him to have any humanity, her sufferings (should any happen)

must afflict him more than his own, especially, if he has prevailed with her, against her inclination, to put her to so severe a trial. Nay, if a man has relations of merit who depend upon him, humanity requires (in case his estate be not sufficient to maintain them and himself) that he should defer his retirement, until he can settle them in a rational way of maintaining themselves by their own industry.

Lastly, with regard to one's old companions and neighbours, it must be considered, that as interest is the strongest band of union and good will among men, so he, whose profession is any way beneficial to his neighbours, will be sure to possess their esteem; but when once he has relinquished that employment, which was the source of the respect paid him, he must expect to be slighted by those, whose interest alone induced them to care for him. Such neglect may at first, indeed, give some uneasiness to a generous and disinterested mind; but that uneasiness will soon be removed, when one reflects that it is no small pleasure to have an opportunity of distinguishing real from pretended friendships; and that the coldness of narrow hearts, which mind only their own particular interest, deserves rather to be pitied than resented.

Let us now take a view of the other side, and suppose that a man has been guilty of no previous imprudence, with regard to his intended retreat, and that he has laid down a proper plan for the employment of his time. In such a case, retirement should be a delightful situation, at least to old age. A recess from the fatigue, anxiety, dissipation and disappoint-

ments which attend business, and which had so long prevented his attention to things of still greater moment; an exemption from temptations to envy, fraud, flattery, dissimulation, intemperance and revenge; and, in their stead, to enjoy a serenity of mind, undisturbed by the false pursuits, impertinencies, insincerity, and snares of a busy life; and to have leisure for recollection and amendment: if a man has a just regard to the longest part of his duration, such a change should make him happy.

But though several vices may be avoided by retirement, there still remain many to be conquered, which are ready to intrude upon that state; and many virtues to be cultivated, sufficient to give us full employment for every day of our lives, if we carefully attend to them. I shall, for a specimen, name only two of each sort, of the vices, *peevishness* and *sloth*, and of the virtues, *resignation* and *beneficence*.

Among the vices apt to haunt retirement, is *peevishness*. When a man stands no longer in need of his friends, toward carrying on his affairs with success, he often loses that complaisance which made him formerly agreeable, and sometimes contracts a fretfulness and moroseness of temper, which grow upon him by indulgence. Instead of complying with others in their innocent humours or amusements, he studies only to please himself. He discovers a dogmatical sufficiency, and a bluntness in his conversation and behaviour, which, increasing by degrees, render him at least odious to his former companions, and insupportable to his own family, where the storm falls hea-

vieft. But how ungenerous and indecent it is to indulge fuch a habit! Is it not both mean and imprudent to exasperate thofe who ftudy to pleafe us? Is there no gratitude due for benefits we have received? Do we ceafe to be focial creatures, becaufe we have quitted bufinefs? What true fatisfaction can remain to him, whofe ruficity has driven all his diftinterested friends away? That foul muft be favage indeed, which feels no joy in pleafing others. And though we fhould fuppofe a peevifh or morofe man to be, in other refpects, virtuous; yet, ftill fuch a cynical virtue, has much fewer charms than that which is attended with a mutual intercourfe of humanity and good humour, and gives a relifh to all our other bleffings.

Another error ready to creep into our retreat, is *floth*. When a man thinks that he has made a comfortable provision for old age, and finds himfelf no longer obliged to toil for his daily fubfiftence, he is apt to fall from his former hurry, into the contrary extreme of floth and indolence, to rife late, and to lay exercife afide. But to this conduct, without calling in any moral confideration, we need only oppofe health; for he who, from much exercife in the courfe of his bufinefs, finks into lazinefs and indolence, will moft certainly impair his health, and fhorten his days. The humours which were kept in circulation by exercife, will ftagnate and grow acrimonious by floth, and bring on fuch complaints as muft make his life miferable. Reason and experience verify this obfervation,

and he who thinks otherwise, will soon be brought to conviction by his distempers.

Of the virtues to be practised in retirement, I have also named two, *resignation* and *beneficence*; each * of which is difficult to be attained, and yet extremely conducive to happiness. It is not easy to acquire a habit of resignation to the divine will; for when we have formed our own schemes, as we imagine, with prudence and caution, we conclude, that they ought to succeed according to our wishes; and, if they miscarry, we are apt to murmur at the dispensations of Providence, and think our fate hard; though it frequently happens that, had they taken effect, we must inevitably have been ruined. But can any thing be more agreeable to right reason, more becoming weak and ignorant creatures, such as we are, or more conducive to our peace of mind, than an intire resignation to the disposal of that Being, who has infinite

* Tho' resignation is amiable and useful in every condition of life, it is more particularly so in retirement; because, in case of unexpected losses, you have no resource but in this virtue; whereas, while you continue in business, you may repair your fortune by increasing your diligence.

Beneficence also should be more deeply rooted in the heart, after a man has retreated, than it was before, lest he should think the diminution of his income, from laying down his employment, a good apology for diminishing his charity, which is no apology at all; for a man is obliged to do full as much good in a voluntary retirement as he did in business, and has no right to let his retreat injure those who depend upon his assistance, how necessary soever he may find it to deny himself some gratifications.

wisdom to contrive, infinite power to execute; and infinite goodness to direct whatever can relate to our happiness? Most certain it is, that he loses the highest felicity which can be enjoyed on earth, who does not, with a cheerful acquiescence rely on the Supreme Being, and with a thankful heart, acknowledge his perpetual mercies.

Beneficence likewise is a virtue difficult to be attained, because our sympathy with people in distress is painful to us, and the assistance we propose to give them, may cost us labour, time, or money; and the more extensive one's charity is, the greater still is the trouble and expence attending it. But the expediency of this virtue is manifest; for since we must have some intercourse with mankind, as long as we live, and since no man knows whether he may not himself stand in need of help before he leaves the world, we cannot, in justice or decency, expect kindness from others, unless we are ready to show kindness in our turn. Love and be beloved, is a maxim established by every man's experience. And the great Father of the universe, who knows that, of all his creatures, we should be the most miserable without the reciprocal aid one of another, has, for our own interest, commanded us to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Besides, as we can make no recompence to God for his continual favours to us, we should show our gratitude to him by our kindness to his creatures, and be glad, at his desire, and for his sake, to do all the good we can to our neighbour.

Having thus lightly touched upon a few of the ma-

ny virtues we ought to cultivate, and the many errors we ought to avoid in retirement, I shall only add a very short sketch of the proper employment of every day, to prevent our minds from growing torpid, our health from being impaired, and our hours from becoming tedious to us, through inaction.

Let him who has retired from business, employ some thoughts every morning early, in recollecting his past life, in mending his heart, and in preparing himself, after such a manner, as may give him hopes of meeting with a gracious reception at that awful tribunal, where, by the course of nature, he must soon appear. Let him, in the next place, do something in his own profession according to his capacity, and the opportunities of improvement which he has had, allowing no day to pass away without drawing, (in imitation of Apelles) at least, one line; and let him always commit the result of his thoughts to writing, that he may have recourse to it when he pleases, and not be obliged, either to redouble his labour, or lose what he has acquired, when his memory may chance to be impaired. Let him then (if the weather will permit) ride * or walk abroad to partake of those rural pleasures, which so greatly contribute to health of body and vigour of mind. What can gratify a man's senses or reason more, than to view the various productions of the fields, and to contemplate the wonderful contrivance of Providence in their gradual in-

* See the charming description which the younger Pliny gives of the uninterrupted regularity of *Spurinna*, whom he proposes for his model, if ever he should arrive at old age. *Epist. i. lib. 3.*

crease, from the opening seed to the perfect plant? What amazing variety of inimitable beauties does the florist discern in the hyacinth, the tulip, the ranunculus, auricula and polyanthus; and in other flowers of the different seasons? Or if he chooses to raise his eye from those smaller objects to the great works of nature, what can fill the soul with a more awful idea of the author of our being, and with a greater complacency in his protection, than the magnificent prospects of hills, lawns and rivers; mountains, seas and forests; with the august view of the heavens. But if he cannot go abroad, let him, within doors, employ himself in some bodily exercise, of which a great variety may be contrived. After this is done, he may spend the remainder of the day in visiting and obliging his neighbours, or in such innocent recreations and amusements as may be most agreeable to his taste; and then close the evening as he began the morning.

In a word, let him be careful to keep his mind fully and rationally employed for the present, and his prospect serene for the future. But, to prevent the loss of that health, which gives a relish to all other enjoyments, let him not neglect the practice of temperance and daily exercise.

OF OLD AGE.

OLD age may be distinguished into three periods. The first may be called vigorous or green old age, and may, in good constitutions, be supposed to ex-

tend from sixty to seventy. The second may be called declining or stooping old age, and may be supposed to reach from seventy to fourscore. And the third period, which (unless the constitution is extraordinary good) may justly be termed decrepit or helpless old age, creeps on from fourscore to the conclusion of life. When, therefore, we speak of the happiness or dignity of old age, we generally take in no more than the two periods from sixty to fourscore; for (as we shall observe in the sequel) to desire an extreme old age, or immortality on earth, in the present condition of human nature, would be the most absurd wish that ever was conceived; and, if obtained, the most pernicious.

How invaluable a blessing is a virtuous, cheerful, and healthy old age, when the judgment, arrived at full maturity, displays more strength and beauty than ever it did before! But such a felicity is not common, and therefore, some of the ancients would not allow old age to be any better than a middle state between health and sickness, while others called it the most odious and wretched period of human life.

How shall these different opinions be reconciled? The truth is, some constitutions are naturally so infirm from their infancy, that scarce could *Æsculapius* himself (to use *Galen's* phrase) keep them alive to threescore. If such a constitution should, by extreme care, sometimes live to grow old, their age, like their youth, must be subject to many complaints, and may properly enough be called a middle state between health and sickness. It is also true, that accidental vio-

lence may render age, as well as youth, unhappy. But when we consider old age singly, and apart from those contingent circumstances, we shall find that the distress incident to that period arises, for the most part, from the fault of the man, and not of his years; and that the riotousness or imprudence * of youth or manhood (if they do not destroy life in its prime) commonly sow the seeds which gradually grow up and afflict old age. Such afflictions, therefore, ought to be charged on the vices and errors from which they sprung, and not imputed as the necessary consequence of age, which is often free from them.

It is equally unjust to impute such evils to what is called a man's hard fate, or misfortune ; † for gene-

* One sort of imprudence, innocent indeed and bewitching, but fatal to a tender constitution, is a too eager and assiduous application to study. Pity it is, that a vigorous mind should harass a delicate body, and give it no respite until worn out by excessive fatigue, in a few years, it sinks under the yoke, and (if I may use that expression) crushes the mind in its fall; whereas, in a moderate pursuit of knowledge, both body and mind might have continued cheerful and healthy to old age. But why should a good man shorten his days in the pursuit of any science. A vain and transient fame, after he is gone, will make him no recompense. And when he shall mingle with superior spirits, he will soon perceive how small, comparatively, was all that treasure of knowledge which he took so much pains to accumulate.

† Homer introduces Jupiter, complaining that men accuse the Gods for misfortunes which their own folly brings upon them;

— *Θεὸς βροτῶν αἰσίουσι*, Odyss. lib. i. 32.

Perverse mankind ! whose wills created free,
Charge all their woes on absolute decree ;
All to the dooming Gods their guilt translate,
And follies are miscall'd the crimes of fate.

BROOM.

rally speaking, that is but a softer name for his misconduct. In like manner, peevishness, avarice and censoriousness, with which age is reproached, should be ascribed to mens' bad *morals*, and not to their years; since we daily see young persons who are fretful and covetous, and old people who are complaisant, and generous to a high degree. And though it must be allowed that some old men, contrary to all the dictates of reason and religion, persist in these vices, it must be also confessed, that the propensity towards them appeared early in life, and did not commence with its last stages. Let us suppose an old man of good stamina, unhurt by former excesses of any kind, and trained up in a virtuous course from which he has rarely deviated; can we call him wretched? so far from it, that such a man, by observing a few necessary rules, with regard to his health, may enjoy a larger share of happiness than ever he did before. Nay, some great geniuses of antiquity went so far, as to affirm that old men were particular favourites of heaven *.

In Cicero's admirable treatise *De Senectute*, we read of a multitude of great men among the Romans, whose age was highly useful to their country, and pleasant to themselves. If we believe Cornaro, (and there is no reason to suspect his veracity) no period of

* Αθάνατοι Τιμῶσι παλαιότερος ἀνθρώπους. Iliad, xxiii. lin. 788.

Th' immortal Gods revere a good old man.

life could be more delightful than his age was. But Cornaro, you will say, lived over abstemiously and precisely, eating and drinking by weight and measure, which is a servitude too mean and selfish to be undergone for the sake of a transient life, that, with all our care, cannot be stretched to any considerable duration. I will allow, that Cornaro's scrupulous regularity was well adapted to his delicate and slender frame; but then his method of living is by no means necessary, or proper to be imitated by those of a more vigorous constitution. The late excellent bishop of Worcester, doctor Hough, eat flesh meat sufficient to satisfy his appetite; and drank some wine and strong beer every day; and yet lived in good health and spirits, with the perfect use of all his limbs and senses to ninety three, and upwards. As to his mental faculties, they seemed to be rather improved than impaired by time. Distinguished as he was, by the benevolence of his heart, he was no less so by his polite accomplishments, and a peculiar elegance and dignity appeared in all he did and said, to the last moment of his amiable life.

How august and awful is the view that Philologus of Ravenna gives us of several Venetian senators, every one at least an hundred years old, who frequently appeared in public together, in his younger days, venerable with their white locks and magnificent robes, attracting almost the adoration of the beholders. This was the lovely effect, says our author, of moderation and temperance, which he never expected to

see again, since luxury and avarice had unhappily gained so great an ascendant, that, in his latter days, scarcely did one noble Venetian appear in public, who had arrived to the age of ninety.

You will tell me perhaps, that these gentlemen, and the Romans extolled by Cicero, were rich and powerful, which made their age respectable; but how shall age and poverty be supported together? Cicero assures us that the poet Ennius, supported himself under both with great magnanimity. Virgil's old Corycian gardener was as happy as a king. Many of the ancient philosophers lived cheerfully under a load of years and poverty, declaring, that if their wealth was small, their wants were still smaller. And surely, it was not owing to their riches or power, that the first hermits who retired from the world to avoid persecution, lived so long, and so serenely in their deserts.

Would you know these companions of age, which make it happy in poverty as well as in wealth, their names are virtue, useful learning and health. To possess virtue in old age, a man must have been, from his infancy, trained up in the constant practice thereof. The neglect of early discipline is the great and fatal error that so frequently makes youth stubborn, manhood worthless, and age miserable. If parents (according to the excellent advice of Mr. Bennet*) would accustom their children, from their first dawn of reason, to controul their appetites and passions,

* See his book on education.

and do always what is right, in spite of their inclination to the contrary, a short time would make them find the road to virtue smooth and easy. And if they would farther teach children this grand and important secret, *viz.* That to learn early to contract and lessen their wants, would bestow more real happiness and contentment than to increase their riches; such instructions would lay the first and most solid foundation for the future felicity of their children. But when parents, through indulgence or inadvertency, have neglected proper discipline early, the children themselves, as soon as they are capable of reflexion, should cultivate temperance, abstinence, and every other virtue, which are indispensably necessary to their present and future happiness.

As to erudition, or useful learning, the second concomitant of age that contributes to render it happy: it must be allowed, that youth is the proper time to sow the seeds of learning at our schools and universities; but age is the season when its noblest fruits are gathered, and when the want of it is most sensibly felt and deplored. During the ardour of youth, or vigour of manhood, the mind may find some entertainment in the exercise and occupation of the body; but when youth and vigour are gone, reading becomes a wonderful consolation to age. All the treasures of the ancients in those valuable branches of knowledge wherein they excelled: all the subsequent improvements of the moderns, in many useful articles of the arts and sciences: the various achievements and customs of mankind, in the different ages and nations

of the earth ; their remarkable virtues, vices and examples : all these are lost to the man of no erudition. The noble entertainment arising from such knowledge, to fill up the vacuities of his time, which otherwise would be gloomy and tedious, affords a pleasure that neither riches nor honours can bestow. How vile and pitiful, therefore, is the disposition of those parents, who, by neglecting to give their children a proper education, when it is in their power, deprive them of this inestimable source of consolation ! but when this happens to be the case, a man must endeavour to supply the defect of education by his own industry, which sometimes makes a wonderful proficiency.

The third companion necessary to make age comfortable, is health. This is principally secured by an early habit and daily practice of temperance : by an assiduous use of moderate exercise ; by carefully forbearing and avoiding what they find from experience to disagree with them, by removing all impediments to the soundness of their sleep ; by keeping the necessary discharges of the body regular with the help of art, when nature, at any time, fails in that office ; and lastly, by making their company agreeable to, and courted by, the young and sprightly.

But allowing that these companions may attend us in our last stages, and that old age, for the most part, is virtuous, learned and healthful ; yet still there seem to be several grievances belonging to that period, which neither nature nor art can redress. The ancients, as well as the moderns, differ in their sentiments concerning old age. Horace has drawn a hideous

picture of it *; but Cicero † a most amiable one. Originals of both pictures are, no doubt, still to be found, but most, I hope, of the amiable kind; especially where mens' own folly or vice has not been the cause of their misfortune.

We shall here collect, into one point of view, the most material grievances with which old age is said to be oppressed, and examine whether or no there is any reasonable foundation for such complaints.

It is objected then, that age renders the body feeble, and unfit for great actions. It deprives men of the pleasures of youth. It exposes them to sudden and various illnesses from cold, heat, or other accidents. It is more obnoxious to contempt and ridicule than any other period. It stands often single and lonely, without any support, bereaved of children, relations and friends; having outlived the companions of youth, and being unable for new connexions. Lastly, old age is alarmed and disquieted with the apprehensions of approaching death.

* Old men are only walking hospitals,
Where all defects and all diseases crowd,
Oppress'd with riches which they dare not use.
In all their actions lazy, timid, cold;
Hopeless, morose; full of delays and fears;
But eager to protact a wretched life.
Ill-natur'd censors of the present age,
And fond of all the follies of the past.

Earl of Roscommon

† See Cicero's elegant treatise *De Senectute*.

As to the first objections; it is not always true, that age renders men unfit for great actions. Abraham was eighty years old when he beat the four kings near Damascus. Moses was above an hundred * when he led the armies of Israel through the wilderness. And Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, says of himself, "Forty † years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me to espy out the land; and now lo, I am at this day fourscore and five years old, and yet I am as strong at this day for war, both to go out and to come in, as I was in the day that Moses sent me." Besides, great actions are not performed by extraordinary strength of body, but by experience, wisdom, courage, and other endowments belonging properly to the mind. The champions of old, so renowned for strength of sinews, with their massy clubs, and sevenfold shields, would at present make but a poor figure in a battle, or at a siege, against muskets and artillery; and even, in ancient times, Cicero remarks, that though Ajax was much more robust than Nestor, yet the Grecian general says nothing of the former, but avows, that if he had ten such as Nestor in his army, he should soon demolish Troy. The strength of old men consists in their authority, prudence and capacity, to direct those who are younger and more robust. It would be endless to recount all the instances recorded in history, of old men who saved their country from ruin by their courage, experience and foresight. Surely the architect who plans

* Deuter. xxxiv. 17.

† See Josh. chap. xiv.

the building, and directs the work, is not less useful than he who hews the stones, or tempers the mortar. Add to this, that if old men have lost the vigour and agility of youth, they have also, generally speaking, lost their relish for feats of activity; and do, or should take delight in the nobler and more useful exercise of the understanding, especially, in the practice of doing good.

It is objected, in the second place, that age is robbed of the pleasures of youth. If by the pleasures of youth, you mean the gratification of voluptuousness, it is no great unhappiness to be deprived of such pleasures. The eagerness of men to indulge themselves in unlawful pleasures, has been at all times, and in all nations, the strongest incitement to fraud and violence; and shall that period of life be reckoned the most unfortunate, which has the least relish for the cause of so much mischief, and weans us from those appetites which reason could not controul? If stews and bagnios are not frequented at that time of life, are not the loathsome and painful diseases that attend lewdness also avoided? Is temperance an enemy to happiness? or has ever any man suffered in his health, fortune or reputation, on account of his sobriety? Again, if old people are secluded from the pleasures of youth, they have pleasures suited to their taste, which make them ample amends. Planting, building, and improvements in agriculture, supply them with a perpetual source of entertainment. Is not the reading of history, poetry, natural and moral philosophy, an inexhaustible fund of instruction and amuse-

ment? And what shall I say of the sacred scriptures, where they may find so many inimitable sublimities and beauties, both in the style and sentiment, that it is difficult to determine, whether the intelligent scholar will be more charmed with the prose of Moses and the New Testament, or with the poetry of Job, David and Isaiah. Have not old people the grandeur, variety and sweetness of rural scenes and prospects to give them delight? and can they not do good if they please, which alone surpasses all the gratifications of irregular appetites?

The third argument, that, in an advanced age, every slight accident exposes men to some sudden illness, comes next to be considered. It is true, that thoughtless old people are more liable to inconveniences from any sudden change in diet, weather, and various other incidents, than healthy young people, because their strength is impaired; but it is equally true, that their greater experience and knowledge should teach them to guard against those inconveniences. If, for instance, an old man, heated with exercise of any kind, shall expose his body suddenly to the cold air, or drink any small liquor cold to quench his thirst, he will probably throw himself into some present illness. But is there an old man on earth, endowed with common sense, who does not know, from the sad experience of others, or his own, that he endangers his health by committing so gross an error? In such a case, therefore, we ought to call the sufferer rather foolish than unfortunate. In short, we shall find, upon a fair calculation, that the giddiness

and inexperience of our early days, renders us obnoxious to several illnesses, which the care and caution of advanced life have taught us to prevent; and that, upon a just balance, the vigour and rashness of youth, suffer more from external accidents than the debility and sedateness of age.

In answer to the fourth objection, which alleges that old people are more exposed to contempt and ridicule, than the younger sort, as their comeliness, which once made them amiable, is lost, and their strength is impaired, which defended them from insults; I will allow, that a wicked and debauched old age does, and ought to meet with contempt and ridicule; and, indeed, no creature can be more despicable or infamous, than a decrepit old fellow affecting the vices of youth, and corrupting others by his nauseous gallantries, and vile example. But, on the other hand, it is well known, that an useful and virtuous old age never meets with any reproach, on account of wrinkles or loss of strength; so far from it, that an awe or reverence for the decent and respectable grey hairs of old, good men, seems to be impressed by nature on the minds of all nations. Surely it is no mark of contempt shown to age, that the most intricate affairs of kingdoms and commonwealths, have generally been intrusted to the management of men of years and experience; and the son of Solomon did not pursue the road to honour or safety, when he adhered to the advice of his young men, and despised the admonition of his father's counsellors.

As to the fifth objection, that age stands frequently

single and lonely, without any support, bereaved of children, relations and friends, having outlived the companions of youth, and being unable to form new connexions; I answer, in the first place, that such a surivance comes very seasonably to detach the mind from the cares and concerns of this world, and dispose it to follow, without reluctance, those friends in whom we formerly took delight, into a state of felicity which is never more to be interrupted. It is also to be observed, that nature, by reducing the passions of old people to a less degree of violence than in youth, and by reminding them that they shall quickly follow their ancestors, enables them to bear the loss of friends and relations with more equanimity and resignation than is common among younger people. But to come more closely to the objection: it cannot reasonably be affirmed, that a healthy and cheerful old age is unable to form new or useful connexions, because we see every day, that the conversation and friendship of a good humoured and judicious old man is more coveted * and courted, than those of any young person endowed with the same qualities; as some improvement may be always made from the experience of age, with which youth is absolutely unacquainted. Besides, young people learn with more pleasure from the old than from those of their own standing.

* I was told by a physician, who had been invited to dinner at Paris, on purpose to see the celebrated Fontenelle, that the conversation of that amiable man, at ninety-six, was sprightly and entertaining to the highest degree.

To the last objection, that age is alarmed and disquieted with the apprehensions and terrours of approaching death, or rather of that *something* after death, *the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveller returns*. Before I answer this objection, it will be proper to observe, that nothing could be more worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness, than to plant a strong desire of life in the human heart; for otherwise, any trifling disquietude, or unaccountable delusion, might induce men every day to destroy themselves. From this innate principle, we see that when life is in danger, both old and young are alarmed. But I must say, in answer to the objection now made, that old people have much less reason to be alarmed. For, supposing that, after the expiration of the constitutional period allotted to man by nature, he could live some ages longer, his miseries must increase to such a degree, as would effectually restrain his appetite for perpetuity of life, and make him ashamed of the pleasing visions he might at any time have formed to himself of immortality upon earth. The truth of this will evidently appear from the following consideration: the mechanism of the human body, upon which the vigour of the external senses and mental faculties depend, undergoes necessary and natural changes through time. All the conduits and pipes grow narrow and stiff, and the fluids must be retarded and obstructed in their circulation. The consequences, with regard to a man's outward form, are shocking: not the smallest trace of his youthful comeliness, or reverend appearance of his decent old age remains: his

face becomes withered and furrowed, he loses his teeth and hair, his eyes sink in their sockets, and he appears wretched, ghastly, and hideous. In the next place, these changes must occasion inexpressible pain * and anxiety that make life a perpetual torment. But what is still more deplorable, the memory and understanding must be gradually impaired, and, after some time, quite extinguished, by which our old man becomes dead to all natural affection, and utterly deprived of the benefit of conversation, and of reading, that was his best, his last consolation. His sight, hearing, taste, and other outward senses must decay and perish, which cuts him off from any possible relish or attainment of the most lawful and natural pleasures: so that, upon the whole, our *immortal* would become the most despicable, odious, and mortifying object in the whole creation; and dean Swift † had reason to say, “that no tyrant, were he ever so cruel,

* The reason of this is obvious: the blood forcing its way from the heart, while the stiffened arteries oppose its circulation: the air, included in man's aliment, expanding itself, and almost bursting the intestinal tube, for want of that power of digestion which formerly restrained it: these and a thousand other struggles that necessarily arise during the extreme debility of all the organs of the body, must occasion inconceivable languors, pain and restlessness, if men were to outlive the periods adapted, by nature, to their respective constitutions.

† See Gulliver's voyage to Laputa, chap. x. concerning the Strulbrugs or IMMORTALS, where the author (if I may venture to give my opinion) writes with more modesty and good sense, than in any other chapter of his travels.

“ could invent a death to which our miserable old man
“ would not run with pleasure from *such an immor-*
“ *tal*ity:” and indeed God is very gracious in the ap-
pointment of death for his relief.

Again, if, in defiance of those consequences, our old man should still be haunted with the terror of death, he should, with the strongest effort of his reason, endeavour to conquer that terror, and make, at least, a virtue of necessity, by bringing his mind to submit cheerfully to that change, which he can by no art evade; and he should arm himself with resolution for that combat, in which every individual of the human race must once, and but once, be engaged.

Besides, every old man has a greater number of his friends and relations, in that *undiscovered country*, than he can have on earth, and those whom he may leave behind will quickly follow him: and shall he be afraid to join them again? Does he propose no satisfaction in the society of those great and good men, and those exalted geniuses, of whom he has heard and read so much, and so frequently?

But above all, when we consider that the same supreme and gracious Intelligence governs the world of spirits, who rules this earth, may we not, from his experienced goodness, safely rely on him for the security and happiness of our future existence? This hope, the religion of nature inspires. The hopes of the CHRISTIAN are still more sublime, removing the doubts, and exalting the joys of immortality.

A D R E A M,

*OR VISIONARY REPRESENTATION OF THE SOUL'S
EMPLOYMENT AFTER DEATH.*

READING, last night, in the Universal History, an account of the great care which the ancient Egyptians took to have their bodies embalmed after death, and of the immense charges they were at to provide sumptuous repositories for them, where they should be safe and entire for ages: and, considering that all this care and expence arose from a notion they entertained, of the soul's hovering about the body, as long as any union of its parts subsisted, I was astonished, that a people so rational in other respects, should adopt such a senseless opinion! A worthy occupation, truly, for an immortal spirit, after its enlargement, to watch a loathsome carcase for ages, which, though formerly united with it, had in death neither use nor beauty to make its presence desirable.

How much more noble was the idea of Socrates*, who told his friends, after he had drank the hemlock, that his body, which they should presently see dead, was no part of Socrates who had made his escape from it. But the most sublime idea of a future state, and most suitable to the dignity of man, made after the image of the Creator, is that which represents, not only the perfect refinement of the mind, but the glo-

* See Plato's Phædo.

rification also of the body, and the final conjunction and immortality of both.

Musing thus upon the state of the soul after its separation from the body, the thought made so strong an impression on my mind, that it kept me awake for some hours after I went to bed: before morning, however, I fell asleep, and dreamed that I died suddenly, without any previous pain or sickness. No sooner was my soul dismissed from its confinement, but methought I immediately felt the happy effects of my freedom. All my faculties were enlarged, new thoughts sprung up in my mind, new objects surrounded me, and I was endowed with a new capacity to apprehend them. Every thing about me was so refined and exalted, beyond any thing I had ever imagined, that there are no words, in any language I know to express them. I thought myself somewhat like a man born blind, who, having lived a long time in the world, and heard people often talk of light and colours, had formed strange notions of them in his own imagination, comparing them to different sounds and surfaces, but never knew what they really were, until the cataracts, which shut out the light, were happily removed from his eyes.

While I stood anxious and doubtful, whether my new existence had any thing real in it, or was only an illusion, I saw a man breaking out from an innumerable multitude, which was at a distance, and coming toward me, and, as he drew near, I knew him to be a late deceased friend.

I perceived you to be a little bewildered, said he,

and came, out of pure friendship, to encourage you, at your first and transient appearance in this region. I am indeed, so much engaged at present, that I cannot show you those things that are most worthy of your observation in this place, but I have recommended you to guides equally willing, and more able than myself, to give you all the information you desire. Yonder they are, farewell. I sadly regretted his departure, but my new conductors were at hand: the one seemed to be a youth of celestial beauty, and to have a majesty in his air, and a gracefulness in his motion, far above any person I had ever beheld; but I was most delighted with the compassionate kindness which appeared in his countenance, and which persuaded me that he was come for my protection. I was going to kneel before him, but, with a smile full of tenderness, he hastily prevented me, and said, *see thou do it not, for I am thy fellow servant*, and only thy guardian angel. The other was an old man, whose figure appeared mean at a distance, but venerable as he drew nearer. An easy cheerfulness, familiarity, and benevolence, conspicuous in his air and address (which seemed, nevertheless, in some degree to be contradicted by his features) so struck me, that I concluded him to be Socrates, and thought myself very happy in his company.

You are welcome, stranger, said he with his ancient cheerfulness, what do you now think of the descriptions which Homer, and our other Greek poets, have given of the state of the dead? You are, no doubt, of opinion, that their representations of the dead

were only allegories, invented to deter the living from vice, and incite them to virtue; and allegories certainly they were, continued he, partly obscure, and partly absurd, and yet under such poetical fictions were couched most of our inducements to piety and virtue in my younger days; but God, of his mercy, has accepted my endeavours to please him, through a Saviour whom I knew not. I longed * for the manifestation of a messenger from heaven, who should reveal the will of the Deity to man; but you Christians, who have been blessed with such a messenger, have generally made a perverse use of his doctrine. True, said I, and may the Almighty open the eyes and mend the hearts of those that are yet to come: but pray, good Socrates, may I be permitted to ask how yon prodigious crowd is employed? A multitude makes no crowd here, said he, as it commonly does on earth; there is no pressing or squeezing for place among us; for, as our composition is pure and refined, whenever any thing is to be seen or heard, which naturally brings a multitude together, we presently slip into a theatre prepared to our hands, larger or smaller as the occasion requires, and every person glides swiftly into his proper place, higher or lower in the theatre; and, as we hear and see distinctly at a great distance, there is no necessity to thrust ourselves near an object, in order to view or understand it more accurately. As to yonder multitude, you shall know their business presently, for we

* See Plato's Alcibiades, ii.

came, at your friend's request, on purpose to give you a general idea of our common entertainments in this place. Be wise, and you shall see a great deal more hereafter.

We then drew near to one of these theatres, which to me appeared a more magnificent and beautiful structure than I had ever seen or read of before. The body of the building, together with the columns and decorations within and without, seemed to be of the whitest and most delicate marble, finished with amazing art: the seats and benches of pure gold, and the area of the finest emerald: the whole illuminated with a splendour and brightness which I am not able to describe. Here an angel of high rank was explaining to the spirits lately arrived, the nature of the human mind, the beauty, extent and necessity of virtue; the reasons of the soul's connexion with the body, the bands of their union; and the certainty of a resurrection. The audience listened with admiration and joy, and I was so charmed with the entertainment, and so eager to understand the subjects he treated on, that I would have continued there, had not my guides admonished me to step further.

I shall conduct you next, said Socrates, to an assembly which seldom meets, but happens to be now sitting. It is a rendezvous from all nations, of those who made it their business on earth to inquire with reverence into the works of God, from the solar system and eccentric comet, down to the smallest plant and minutest insect. It is not here, continued he, as on earth, where the human mind, from the narrowness

of its capacity, and the richness of the works of creation, is obliged to confine itself to one branch of knowledge. Here the mind is so enlarged, that the former study of an age is soon acquired, and yet the fulness, variety, and beauty to be met with in every work of the Almighty, are so inexhaustible, that they will furnish new arguments of admiration and praise to all eternity. This assembly meets at stated times, in order to communicate their discoveries one to another. A genius practised in such contemplations, either learns from a superior spirit, the true nature and essence of any substance which he desires to know, or travels himself, in a very little time, to any remote part of the universe, to make discoveries on the spot. The discovery that he has made (for there is but one language here) is communicated to the whole assembly, and every member takes his turn; while at the same time, a company of angels assists to do honour to the assembly, and farther elucidate, if desired, the facts related by each speaker: and, upon every new discovery, a shout of praise and thanksgiving is sent up to him whose power and wisdom are infinite. My guides had been drawing near to this assembly all the while that Socrates was describing it; and we came up at the moment when a member, who had attended a comet in several directions, through different tracks of space, explained to the society the curve which it described, and the cause by which its motions were regulated in the various parts of its rapid course; upon which one of those joyful hallelujahs, mentioned before, was sung by the whole company.

The splendour and majesty of this assembly so transported me, and the sweetness of the music filled my heart with such delight, that I attempted to join in the chorus, but found my voice too feeble for their exalted pitch.

Observe there, said Socrates, (pointing to a stately portico near this assembly) a select company of contemplative sages surrounding that graceful and radiant seraph, who, to their entire satisfaction, and transcendent joy, unfolds to them those mysteries of providence which they could not comprehend on earth, and clears up every obscure step of the divine economy, with which they desire to be made acquainted.

But do not imagine, from what you have yet seen, that this region is destined to bestow happiness only upon the inquisitive and learned. Piety, righteousness, and charity, practised on earth, are infinitely more regarded here than science; but at the same time I must tell you, that all who are admitted hither, whether male or female, old or young, Grecian or Barbarian (as we Greeks used arrogantly to distinguish mankind) become soon more knowing than the most learned man on earth ever was. For, as the different attainments of men among you arise, for the most part, from the different disposition of their organs, and their different opportunities of improvement; and as the organs and opportunities of all here are equally good, the only conspicuous regard paid to human creatures in this place, arises from the different degrees of piety and virtue, which they acquired

in their state of probation; and you will find that they are ranked accordingly, but still without raising any envy or jealousy in those of inferior degree; for every individual is conscious, that he enjoys the greatest felicity he is capable of, and unspeakably more than he deserved.

I must also inform you, that virtuous friendships, cultivated on earth, are not broke off here; for though every creature you see, loves you, and is wonderfully ready to oblige you, yet next to the presence and favour of God, your friends are the greatest delight of your heart. Here are myriads of husbands and wives, parents and children, relations, companions, and neighbours, expressing their minds in the highest strains of gratitude and praise to the Supreme Being; who, after all their tedious care and solicitude on account of each other, after all the vexations and disappointments they met with in the world, has at last admitted them into these blessed mansions, from which every sort of wickedness and distress is banished for ever, and where they will see each other happy, without interruption, and without end.

Your own eyes, said he, shall confirm the truth of what I have told you; and immediately he conducted me to the summit of a high hill, where all the great beauties of nature lay blended together, in a charming wildness around me; and where the whole region was full of people: but when I fixed my eye on any particular prospect, it appeared like an immense garden laid out with a regular variety, where the verdure of trees and lawns, the beauty of flowers and fruits, the

brightness and motion of waters, and the contrast of light and shade, that appeared through the whole, formed the most delightful landskip I ever beheld.

In yonder arbours, alcoves, and walks, continued he, you have a view of the relations and friends I mentioned, in conversation sweet and pleasing beyond all human imagination. You see also theatres, porticoes, pavilions, temples, chapels, and oratories, of various materials, dimensions, and architecture, where larger and smaller companies frequently meet to improve themselves in every heavenly virtue, to admire the works of creation and providence, and to adore the author of all their felicity; at which times, to their inexpressible joy, they are admitted into as full a view of the transcendant glory of the Almighty, and as large a participation of his favour, as their respective minds are at present able to receive. Here Socrates paused a moment, and I looked into two or three of those temples and oratories, where with the utmost pleasure, I beheld several of my departed friends, whose lives were exemplary for piety and goodness. Some of these, in loud and melodious anthems, exalted the name of their Creator, and *some in expressive silence mus'd his praise**. Their garments shone like light, a radiant crown encompassed their heads, and their countenances discovered so much satisfaction and benignity, that the very sight of them was transporting. Blessed society, cried I! no wonder

* See the hymn at the conclusion of Thomson's seasons.

the martyrs of old, and good men in all ages, despised temporary afflictions for *the joy which was set before them*. Blessed indeed, said Socrates, and yet how easily may that blessing be attained! What madness has possessed mankind, that they could not all come to this place, considering the rational and advantageous conditions required of them, the gracious encouragements given them, and that none are finally excluded, but those perverse wretches who have contracted such deliberate habits of malice and wickedness, without repentance, that our conversation and employment here would be disagreeable and irksome to them, suppose they could be admitted. But there is a very different abode appointed for miscreants, who took pleasure in affronting the Deity, and injuring their neighbour.

He then led me to the brink of a dreadful precipice: look down there, said he, and view the habitation of misery, and listen to the groans of anguish. What the final result will be, with respect to these criminals, God only knows, who punishes for the sake of justice, example and amendment, and not through fear, anger, or revenge, as man often does. One thing we are sure of, which is, that the Great Judge of the universe, will finally determine what is wisest, best, and fittest to be done, with respect to all his creatures, to the full conviction of every rational being.

I find that Christians daily offer up this petition to the Deity, *Thy kingdom come*, in a prayer taught them by him who perfectly knew the will of heaven.

But how can God's blessed kingdom of universal righteousness, charity, holiness, and happiness come; while so many myriads of reasonable creatures continue disobedient and refractory? May not punishment proportioned to the heinousness of their crimes, and to the malevolence of their dispositions; together with some remote hope or possibility of pardon, or some other method contrived by infinite wisdom, though unknown to us, at last produce humiliation and amendment? Whereas, eternal and horrible despair can produce nothing but blasphemy, malice, and distraction, which seem repugnant to the ends of creation, and to that order and beauty preserved in the government of the universe. Does it become weak and ignorant man to affirm, that there shall be no end of sin, which is so hateful to God, whose prerogative it is to bring order out of confusion? But my sight is too feeble to penetrate so far into futurity. To the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, therefore, I leave the fate of those unhappy criminals to be determined. But I perceive that such a dismal scene shocks you! This exalted spirit, continued he, (bowing respectfully to my guardian angel, who accompanied us all the while) can entertain you better.

The angel then taking me graciously by the hand, said, I am glad to meet you here in any shape, because I hope, that what you see amongst us will give you a just idea of the value and dignity of the human mind, and evermore induce you to pursue objects worthy of that image after which you was cre-

ated. How vain, trifling, and transient, are the honours, wealth, and pleasures of the earth, compared with the transcendent and endless happiness enjoyed here! The great privilege and glory of man, his principal, and almost only superiority over the beasts of the field, consist in the relation in which he stands towards God; in being made after his likeness, capable to serve him, and to enjoy his presence and favour for ever. The time will come when the righteous among mankind shall be raised to the rank* in which I now stand, and perhaps a great deal higher, through the favour of the Almighty, who is perpetually enlarging our capacities, and drawing us nearer to himself in every kind of felicity. My endowments, at present, excel what they were at my first production; for it is impossible to have so near a view of the wisdom, goodness, and holiness of God, as we enjoy in this place, without receiving continual improvements. You think your faculties greatly refined by a cursory mingling with the world of good spirits. How will they be really exalted, if ever you come to dwell in these regions, where the source of all perfections is visible? How often have I pitied your folly, when you have given way to your passions and appetites, and deviated from your plain and known duty, which is the only path that leads hither. I could, and did frequently guard you from the snares of men, and wicked spirits; and, in manifest dangers, seconded the remonstrance of your own conscience, by suggesting proper reasons

* See Spectator, No 3.

against sin, while yet your mind hesitated between your duty to God and the allurements of the world. But I had no orders to over-rule your freedom, or defend you from yourself when you was perversely determined to gratify your vicious inclinations. Come, nevertheless (continued he, with an air of tenderness and compassion) I will now conduct you to yonder eminent temple, and will there show you as much of the external majesty of the Almighty, as a dim-sighted mortal can behold. And as we went along he continued his gracious discourse in the following manner.

O THAT men would sincerely endeavour to entertain a just conception of the Deity, of his excellencies and perfections; and would, in all events, resolve, to the utmost of their power, to perform the plain and obvious duties of loving God and their neighbour, and never quit the road of righteousness and holiness, to search for any other by-paths to heaven: hereby they might secure to themselves, through the merit and intercession of the great Redeemer, a joyful reception into this region of light and truth, where their capacities would soon be enlarged, all their mistakes rectified, and themselves made, beyond imagination, happy. How much wiser would such a conduct be, than to wrangle and dispute concerning difficult points, which they do not yet understand, hating, in the mean time, and persecuting their neighbours, because they differ in opinion with them on those abstruse speculations. There is nothing more certain, than that the supreme Being

cannot make himself less infinite than he is in every excellence, in order to accommodate his immensity to the narrow apprehension of mankind, or make his conduct, in every instance, obvious to the human understanding. Why then should such a weak, ignorant creature, as man, break through all the plain rules of charity, swell with pride, and damn and persecute his neighbours, because in some high and intricate points, they cannot think as he does? O that they would all rather strive, by a sincere and humble practice of piety and virtue, to arrive at this place, where their understanding will be wonderfully enlightened, and all their doubts quickly removed! We, whose intellectual faculties are far superior to those of man, when we contemplate the divine nature, and perfections, and his government of the universe, perpetually discover new glories, and new matter of wonder and adoration, and shall discover more and more to all eternity. Nay, (to use the words * of one of your own species,)

Eternity is too short to utter all his praise.

As the angel had pronounced these words, we found ourselves near the temple, and I perceived innumerable rays of a glorious light darting from it, which far surpassed the sun in brightness, and yet rather invigorated than dazzled the sight. But when we arrived at the outer gates, and the angel was going to open one of them, conscious of my own un-

* Addison's hymn in Spectator, No. 453.

worthiness, and afraid to appear in the presence of him, whose eyes are *purser than to behold iniquity*, I was struck with so great an awe of the majesty and holiness of God, that I immediately awaked, and found my bed trembling under me.

M E D I T A T I O N S

ON

S E V E R A L S U B J E C T S.

I. *ON THE DAY FAR SPENT.*

WITH me the day is far spent, and the night is at hand. The great business on which I was sent into the world is scarce begun; and yet I know, that I must, and shall soon appear before the tribunal of God, to give an account of my behaviour. Awful thought! What shall I do? I would gladly return to thee, O my father and my God, and dedicate the remaining part of my life to thy service. But wilt thou accept the offer which I make at the eleventh hour? Especially since it was not through any want of the strongest inducements to serve thee, that I have so long continued to neglect my duty, but because I was a slave to my own unruly appe-

tites and passions, and stifled the witness of God in my heart, which remonstrated against my follies? I have no plea for my transgressions, and therefore have reason to dread thy displeasure. Shall I then despair of the mercies of my God! No! that I will never do, for, *though he slay me, yet will I put my trust in him.* When I reflect on the time past of my life, and review the part which I have acted in the world, the retrospect is indeed gloomy and comfortless. I tremble at the remembrance of my trespasses. The frequency and guilt of them are dreadful to me. I have trespassed against every obligation to gratitude, and have employed the very favours which God bestowed upon me, to purchase the follies of sin. On the other hand, when I consider the relation in which I stand to the great God and Father of all, and view the part which he acts towards his creatures, the prospect grows clearer; I must not, I cannot despair. He was pleased to create me after his own image, to make me capable of serving him, of being admitted into his presence, and of enjoying his favours for ever. His mercies have followed me all the days of my life. He has supported me under a multitude of adversities, any one of which might have overwhelmed me, had not his goodness interposed. He has even defended me against myself, and protected me against the natural consequences of my own wickedness and folly. The conveniences and comforts of life, which I enjoy, I owe all to his bounty. The happy opportunity of recollection and amendment, which he has

graciously vouchsafed to bestow upon me, free from the cares and dissipations of the world, is a mercy for which my soul desires to bless and praise him for ever. But, above all, when I consider, that God so loved the world, as to send his own son to redeem it, and to call sinners to repentance and favour ; this amazing testimony of his condescension and goodness is sufficient to revive the most languid hope ! *Why art thou, therefore, cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me ? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the light of my countenance, and my God.*

II. ON THE EXAMINATION OF THE HEART.

WHEN I examine my own heart, I find that I have committed a multitude of grievous sins, for which I can make neither apology nor restitution, and for which I am ashamed to lift up my eyes unto God. And even, yet, while I am ashamed of my past offences, I still find an undisciplined propensity in my heart to hesitate between my duty to God and the delusions of the world, and to extenuate faults, which a sincere and upright soul would condemn without any deliberation. I find also, in myself, on several occasions, an impatience of contradiction, and a peevishness which cannot be pleasing to God, or to my neighbour, and which I would be glad to conquer. O most merciful Father, how different is my disposition from the meekness, humility, and patience of my Redeemer ! O when shall I seriously

and constantly endeavour to imitate his virtues? Upon the whole, in all my scrutiny, I find myself guilty in the sight of God, and have no hope left but in his goodness, and in the merits and intercession of my Redeemer. I will therefore throw myself at his feet, for as his majesty is, so is his mercy. Though I am but dust and ashes, yet he is my father, and let him dispose of me as he pleases. If his infinite goodness will fully and freely pardon my transgressions for the sake of my Redeemer, blessed be his glorious name for ever. But if my sins are so great and my repentance so insincere, that I must be punished for my amendment; even in that case, blessed be his adorable name, and let his holy will be done, and let me submit with resignation and cheerfulness to his fatherly corrections, and though he should slay me, yet let me put my trust in him.

III. OF MAN'S INTEREST IN THE PERFECTIONS
OF THE DEITY.

OMNIPOTENCE is his shield : unerring wisdom his guide : boundless goodness his present joy and future hope : infinite holiness and rectitude his example to be imitated, according to his poor capacity, and a light to show him his own vileness : infinite majesty inspires him with awe and reverence ; and infinite justice with righteousness and obedience. Omniscience and omnipresence strike him with terror when he does evil, and fill him with joy when he does well. The relation of Creator and Father engage him to love and adore : God's natural and moral

government of the world, give peace and security to his mind, as it satisfies him, that the divine Providence can, and always will bring order out of confusion.

A PRAYER formed upon the Consideration of
some of the Attributes of the Deity.

O GOD, who didst create man after thy own image, vouchsafe to give me right conceptions of thee, and to imprint on my soul the awful consideration of thy glorious attributes, so deeply, that I may, at all times, be ashamed and afraid to offend thee. Let me, with joy and adoration, contemplate thy amazing LOVE, in sending thy Son into the world to redeem lost man. Oh ! that I could, in return, love the Lord my God, with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength, and with all my mind : and show the sincerity of my love, by yielding a perfect obedience to all thy commandments.

Stamp on my soul a deep impression of thy *goodness*, which every creature partakes of. O let me pay my tribute of gratitude and praise for this thy ineffimable goodness and beneficence as long as I have any being : and let me always endeavour to do good to my fellow creatures, who stand in need of my assistance, as far as my feeble power reaches.

Let me perpetually bless thy *wisdom*, which, in every dispensation of thy Providence, uniformly does what is fittest and best, which brings order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. Surely, thy

infinite wisdom challenges my cheerful resignation to thy holy will at all times, and forbids my repining at thy dispensations upon any pretence whatsoever.

Let me never forget thy *omnipresence*, before which I continually stand, and from which no privacy or darkness can hide me. And since it is impossible to flee from thy presence, O teach my soul to take delight in thy vicinity, and avoid every thought, word, and deed, that can give thee offence.

Permit me to adore thy *omnipotence*, which made the universe out of nothing, and supports it every moment. And from the consideration of this attribute, let me put my entire trust in thee, and, being careful to do my duty, let me cheerfully leave the event of every thing that concerns me to thy disposal.

Imprint upon my soul thy *truth* and *rectitude*, which challenge from me a thorough sincerity and uprightness of heart, an aversion to hypocrisy, to all intercourse with sin and to every kind of hesitating between God and mammon.

Let me stand in continual awe of thy *justice*, which will by no means clear the guilty and impenitent, and which warns me to sin no more, lest I should be cut off amidst my provocations, and have my portion with the wicked.

Let thy blessed spirit enable me to revere thy *holiness*, which is more pure than that thou canst behold iniquity. O ! when shall I learn to abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes for my many transgressions ? Cleanse me, O most holy God, from eve-

ry pollution, that thou mayest not think me too vile to be received among the number of thy servants.

Give me, O God, an awful impression of thy *serenity* and *peace*, which pass all understanding! Clear my soul from every confusion. Wean my heart from all unreasonable attachments to this world: and for the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, vouchsafe to bestow upon me all those graces and virtues that will secure me thy peace and favour for ever.

IV. OF THE VANITY OF RICHES, HONOUR AND
SENSUAL PLEASURES, COMPARED WITH
PIETY AND VIRTUE.

THERE is no secure or permanent comfort in any thing but in thy favour, O eternal God, who art the *same to-day, yesterday, and for ever, without variableness or shadow of turning*. Every thing else which we possess, is vain, fluctuating, and unsatisfactory. Those things which men pursue with the greatest eagerness, what solid and lasting comfort can they bestow? Are not riches, honour, power, pleasure and friends, the principal objects which we have in view, and court with the greatest assiduity and earnestness? Let us therefore examine them respectively, and see what permanent satisfaction any or all of them can afford.

Riches frequently take to themselves wings and flee away, and leave the owner much more unhappy than they found him. Unfruitful seasons, bad money securities, controverted titles to estates, losses

by fire and water, false friends, intemperance, profuseness, long sickness, civil wars, and a hundred accidents besides, which we can neither prevent nor remove, may deprive us of riches. Have not I seen, with pity and regret, several, who were the boast and envy of the cities where they lived, come to poverty and contempt in a few years? Wealth is, indeed, a blessing, if it is employed in a subserviency to virtue, otherwise it is a snare and a curse. Adored for ever be thy name, O most gracious God, who, by means of my labour and industry, hast vouchsafed to bestow upon me a competency of the good things of this world; enable me to make a proper use of thy bounty, and to consider, that as I received all from thy gracious hand, so it is my duty to employ what is still thy own, according to thy desire. Preserve to me, if it is thy blessed will, what thou thyself hast been pleased to give me, amidst all the dangers that surround me; but if thou shouldst think proper to do otherwise, let me not only be contented but cheerful under thy dispensations, and let me, in every event, bless and praise thy holy name for ever.

As to *honours*, if they minister to pride, and tempt to sin, the possessors were much better without them. As to that honour, particularly, which depends on popular applause, there is nothing more inconstant, or less valuable: the voices which are loud for you to-day, may, through faction or envy, without any fault of yours, be as clamorous against you to-morrow. Of this there have happened a thousand instances in every country. And as to elevated

situations, if they are not accompanied with merit, they make the owners more universally contemptible, since persons of high quality are, by their station, more conspicuous than their inferiors. O my God, let me never covet any other distinction, but that of being thy faithful servant.

Power, is generally obtained and supported by fraud, faction, corruption, or violence, and lasts no longer than those means subsist; and the hatred, envy and revenge, which commonly pursue it, seldom fail, at last, to overtake and pull it down.

Let us next inquire, what solid comfort can arise from *sensual pleasure*? Infamy and disease never fail to attend them, unless they are constantly kept in subjection to reason. And is it not shameful to place our happiness in such gratifications, as put us directly upon a level with the brutes? O my God, let thy grace enable me to keep my appetites and passions always within the bounds which thou hast prescribed.

Lastly, as to the *friendship* of great men, a dependence upon them will be sure to deceive you, unless you meanly and perpetually sacrifice your peace and virtue to their interest and caprice. It is notorious that an unguarded expression, a malicious misrepresentation of any thing you say or do, or the smallest mistake is sufficient to make them your enemies. And if it is a tried friend, a relation, or child, you depend on, how soon may death snatch them away, and blast all your hopes in a moment! Or, if a virtuous wife, who partakes your cares, who studies your ease, and whose exemplary life makes religion

amiable ; if such a friend, I say, is a real consolation, as no doubt she is, how is your joy turned into mourning, in case you survive her ? What heart can conceive a distress equal to the loss of such a companion ? And who can describe the pangs of grief that must attend every remembrance of her ? Here, especially, a thorough resignation to the will of God, the hopes of his support, and the prospect of a happy meeting in heaven, must come to your relief, or you are wretched indeed. How properly, therefore, do the scriptures caution us against putting our *trust in princes, or in any child of man, because there is no help in them.* O most merciful Father, wean my heart from all the sinful pleasures of this world, and from all reliance on wealth, power, or friendship therein, but let my affection be wholly fixed on thee, and be thou my friend, my guide, and my dependence for ever.

V. OF TIME.

TIME is one of the greatest blessings bestowed by the Almighty on his rational creatures, and yet we commonly make a very bad use of it. In the days of health and affluence we think it too short, and cannot spare any part of it from our pleasures to bestow upon our duty. In the days of affliction, indeed, we think it abundantly long and tedious ; and then, if at all, are most likely to employ it well ; but generally speaking, we seem to be insensible of its true value, until we are ready to lose it. That

it may be of inestimable use to us, we plainly perceive, when we give ourselves leisure to think, for several reasons: *First*, Because our reflexions upon it, when properly employed, never fail to make us happy. How unspeakable a blessing is perpetual duration to angels and saints, who are conscious of having done their duty to their gracious master, and who enjoy his love and favour throughout that duration! 2. Because, even in the declension of life, we may still redeem the former time which we have mispent, provided we make no *tarrying to turn to God, and put not off from day to day*. 3. Because, after we have obstinately persisted in abusing the whole of it allotted us by the Creator to work out our own salvation, and when we stand on the extreme verge of life ready to drop into another world, we would give all the riches of the earth, if we had them, to bring back a portion of the time which we fatally misemployed, in order to reform our lives, and screen ourselves from the punishment due to our sins, when, alas, it is too late. How fatal a blindness, how perverse a folly is it, therefore, not to lay hold of this blessing, while it is yet in our power, considering that it flies from us every moment, and is never to return again for a second trial of our obedience? When we stand on the brink of the grave, we see things as they really are, without any mask or false colouring. At that awful period, *power*, will have lost its strength to protect, *riches* their value to relieve, *knowledge* its voice to instruct, and *pleasures* their charms to allure; so that the power

which was not before exerted to defend the helpless, the wealth which never fed the poor, the knowledge which never persuaded to virtue, and the pleasures which arose from vice, were wretchedly employed, or madly pursued, and, at the gloomy hour of death, can neither give hope, peace, nor comfort.

How sweet, on the other hand, is the reflexion of those whose time has been employed to good purpose, according to their capacities and stations in the world? How happy is the prospect of the great, whose power defended the oppressed; of the rich, whose wealth relieved the indigent, and raised merit from distress; of the learned, whose knowledge diffused a love of virtue and piety, and of every person who did all the good, and prevented all the evil in his power? Their time and their talents were wisely employed. Death does not approach them like the king of terrors, but like a friend, who comes to release them from the vanity and sorrows of this world, and to charm their minds with a prospect of that everlasting peace and joy, of which they will soon be put in possession. Eternal God, Father and ruler of the universe, take me under thy mighty protection, and enable me, for the remaining part of my time, by a constant practice of righteousness, charity, and piety, to acquire such habits of loving and serving thee, that the end of my days may be the end of my afflictions, and the beginning of that serenity and joy, which is the everlasting portion of thy children.

VI. OF FRIENDSHIP.

THE comforts arising from the good offices of true friendship, are so highly valuable, above all that riches or power can bestow, that the very mimicry of friendship is one of the greatest favours which wealth or grandeur can confer on those who possess them. It is not altogether for their own sake that riches and power are so much esteemed, but chiefly for the subserviency of those friends and partisans which they are supposed to procure. And, if you take away these friendships, (false and inconstant as they generally are) riches become useless, and power vanishes. A true virtuous friend has many amiable qualities, which, in a low degree, faintly resemble the attributes of the deity; reason wherewith to advise, love to cherish, compassion to pity, wisdom to prevent your wants, and sometimes power to relieve them; together with integrity and truth to remove all suspicion of deceit and self-interest. In short, the benefits accruing from real friendship are inestimable: "A true friend," says the son of Sirach, "is a strong defence, and he that has found such a one has found a treasure. No-thing can countervail a faithful friend, and his excellency is invaluable. A faithful friend is a medicine of life, and they that fear the Lord shall find him."

Suppose a man to be thrown upon a desolate island, and let a superior being approach him with a friend

in one hand, and all the riches of the earth in the other, and give the man leave to choose which of the two he most desired. Would he hesitate a moment to choose the friend? Of what use could riches be in his present situation? Is there not something intrinsic in friendship, an inseparable blessing, useful at all times, and in all places, which power and riches, destitute of friends, cannot bestow?

Our first parent had all the beauties of the creation to contemplate, all the animals under his jurisdiction, and all the pleasures of Paradise to enjoy. But when a true friend was presented to him, he was so transported with the gift, that he seemed to neglect all the other favours he had received. We hope, even at the hour of death, soon to meet a virtuous friend who has gone before us, or whom we leave behind us in this world; whereas riches and power (except so far as we have made a virtuous use of them) are then to depart from us for ever.

I bless and magnify thy holy name, O my gracious God, for those faithful and upright friends with which thou hast condescended to favour me. Let their good example excite me to love and serve thee. And, O Lord, if it be consistent with thy wisdom and justice, let our friendship, begun through thy mercy here, be cultivated and perpetuated to all eternity.

VII. OF A FUTURE STATE.

WE are in this world so surrounded with objects, which continually strike one or other of our senses,

that we find it a difficult task to withdraw our attention from them, and meditate on things at a distance. But, surely, when things at a distance are so very interesting, as our eternal happiness or misery must be, and when we are absolutely certain, that this distant thing will soon be present with every individual of us who is now alive, it is an unaccountable infatuation never to think of our future condition. If a world to come seldom excites our fear or hope, because of its imagined distance, it should, at least, employ our reason and reflexion, because of its certainty. But why should not even a distant prospect of heaven animate and exalt our hope? To a person who attends to the natural consequences of the universal practice of virtue in any society, what can appear more amiable, or more to be desired, than the felicity of heaven?

To be admitted into the company of angels and saints, eminent in virtue and piety, among whom benevolence to their fellow creatures discovers itself in every action; where, from a pure principle of benignity, there is this only emulation, who shall most advance the happiness of others; where those who are full of knowledge inform them that have less, displaying the wisdom, the goodness, the power, and holiness of God, to the joy and admiration of those whom they instruct; where an universal example of rectitude and purity admits no temptation to vice: but, on the contrary, daily improvements are made in the knowledge of themselves and of their duty, of the works of creation

and providence, of God's natural and moral government of the world, subjects equally charming and inexhaustible: and, above all, where the irradiations of God's spirit discover his infinite holiness, glory and goodness to every individual, in proportion as that individual is fit to receive such improving communications: this, indeed, is joy unspeakable, which *eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into the heart of man to conceive.*

View the condition of man in this world, and consider whether his continuance here can be any more than a small portion of his existence, and then say, whether any other object, besides piety and virtue, is worthy of his earnest pursuit? If, from seventy years, the common boundary of old age, you deduct the time spent in the thoughtlessness of childhood, in the follies of youth, in the cares and anxieties of manhood, in the pains and infirmities of old age, in sleep, necessary recreations, dressing and refreshments of the body; how much, or rather how little will remain for the exercise of our mental faculties, which alone distinguish us from the brute creation? Would the wise Creator have endowed us with a reasonable soul, to be annihilated after such a short period of reflexion?

Besides, if we attend to the common calamities of human life, why should we imagine, that a gracious God would send man into the world to suffer so much, and then to be utterly destroyed? The evils we are subject to, from natural distempers,

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from accidental hurts, from our own vice and folly, and from the violence and wickedness of others, are innumerable; in so much, that all writers, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, philosophers, historians, and poets, agree in lamenting the afflictions of mankind. To mention but a few instances of the most extraordinary of these calamities: the universal deluge, the plague of Athens, the destruction of Jerusalem, the persecutions and wars on account of religion, the irruptions of barbarous nations into the more civilized countries of Europe, the late earthquake of Lisbon, and the present war in Germany and France! How can we reconcile these horrid scenes with the power, wisdom and goodness of God in his government of the world, if man was created only to endure such shocking miseries, and then to vanish into nothing? It has been calculated by eminent mathematicians*, that half the human race dies before seventeen. If, therefore, this life is but the beginning of our existence, and scarce long enough to discipline and qualify us for the enjoyment of the remaining part, what folly, what madness is it, to waste the present period in any pursuit which will be destructive to us when it comes to a close! Sensual pleasures unlawfully gratified, and riches or power badly employed, will obstruct our future felicity. Nothing but piety and

* See Halley's tables, calculated from the bills of mortality in Silesia, and the rules laid down for estimating the chances of the duration of lives

virtue can qualify us for happiness in the yet invisible part of our duration : nothing else is worth our attention, and whatever stands in opposition to them should be rejected with abhorrence. We must look upon ourselves as individuals only of the great system of the universe, under the government of one Supreme and Perfect Being. We must, as far as lies in our power, aim at the prosperity of the whole, without ever attempting to rob another member of the community of any part of his convenience in this life, in order to appropriate that convenience to ourselves. In short, we must sincerely endeavour to do our duty, according to the plain and known laws of God, and habituate our minds here to partake of the pure and virtuous pleasures of that society, into which we desire to be admitted hereafter, and, with an humble submission to the Divine will, rather be pleased than terrified at the prospect or approach of our removal.

Almighty and most merciful Father, author of my life and all my comforts, who hast vouchsafed to create me after thine own image, and to make me capable of enjoying thy presence and favour for ever, let me not deface that image by sin and rebellion against thee. Enable me to keep my affections and appetites perpetually under the government of reason, and let piety and virtue prevail over every opposition to them in my soul, during this present state of trial. And, since the struggle cannot now

continue long, let me enter the lists against every corruption of my heart, with resolution and perseverance, waiting cheerfully for that blessed day, when the tumult of my passions shall subside in peace, and temptations to levity or vice shall delude no longer.

VIII. OF CONQUERING OURSELVES.

To conquer ourselves, or to bridle and check every appetite and passion that arise in our minds in opposition to reason, is a noble victory, and worthy to be obtained, at the expence of any labour or trouble which it may cost us. Human life, in this world, is properly called a warfare: our appetites and passions, or the brutal part of our composition, are perpetually rebelling against our reason, sometimes assaulting it with open violence, and sometimes surprising it by snares too artfully laid to be avoided.

To view the numbers and strength of the enemy drawn up against reason, to bring it under subjection, is indeed terrible. Furious anger, fierce lust, brutal intemperance, rancorous envy, cruel covetousness, barbarous revenge, indecent pride, dark treachery, and all the horrid train of corruption that dwells in an undisciplined heart: all these in their turns advancing against reason, constitute a strong and dreadful band of adversaries, which must be opposed with the most firm and resolute courage. Reason indeed has its auxiliaries; conscience, the witness of God within the soul, perpetually declaring

for it against every kind of known wickedness; disgrace and shame, together with the restraint of human laws, to withstand violence and fraud; sad examples of diseases and poverty, to check lust and intemperance; a moral sense of benevolence and humanity, to resist covetousness, anger, and malice; and that peace of mind, and unspeakable complacency, which always attend beneficence, to oppose envy and revenge. But, alas, with all these resources, reason has generally proved too weak for its adversaries, in so much, that the wisest observers of human nature have pronounced the majority among mankind to be wicked, while only a few exalted spirits, after a long and resolute struggle, have been able to conquer their appetites and passions, and bring them under a thorough subjection to reason.

This was almost universally the case of the world before the appearance of Christ; nor need we wonder at it, since the best cultivated spirits among the Heathens were dubious of the immortality of the soul. Socrates himself discourses with great uncertainty about it just before his death: and this universal uncertainty made some of the brightest geniuses of antiquity treat the rewards and punishments of a future life as mere fables; for if the soul, said they, did not subsist after death, how should it be affected with rewards and punishments? Or, if its existence was at best but dubious, wherein consisted man's encouragement to virtue? And how should a hard race be run with vigour, for a prize which no

man was sure of obtaining suppose he had conquered? But blessed be the God of all mercies, the case is now much mended, if men would be just to themselves. The Saviour of the world, who knew the necessity of righteousness, in order to be happy, knew also our frailty and temptations to sin, and has therefore given greater encouragements, and proposed more powerful motives and inducements to the practice of virtue than the world ever heard of before; and thereby has added a weight to the scale of reason, which ought to preponderate against every opposition. If you ask what these motives and encouragements are? I answer, in the first place, that our Redeemer has ascertained the immortality of the soul, which he alone could do, who came from the father of spirits, who perfectly knew the nature of the soul of man, and the purposes for which it was created. *Secondly*, He has discovered the necessity which the soul is to undergo, to habituate itself to the love and practice of virtue, in order to qualify it for admission into that abode of purity and holiness, where *nothing unclean can ever enter*; and, indeed, where no spirit, continuing wicked or impure, would be happy, or relish the enjoyments of that blessed society, suppose it could enter. Nor can I possibly conceive, what well grounded hope, or prospect, a sinner can entertain of future happiness, without believing in the merits and satisfaction of Christ. He stands, without doubt, guilty of many transgressions, for which he can neither make any excuse to God, nor any restitution to the party

offended. And therefore, as he can make no atonement, how can he expect forgiveness? Whereas the Christian has a positive promise from God, through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, of forgiveness and reconciliation, provided he will repent of the evil of his ways, and sincerely resolve to do his duty for the future. *Thirdly*, He has given us a most gracious assurance, that the holy spirit of God shall effectually assist all who sincerely endeavour to do their duty; and shall either preserve them from temptation, or support and deliver them when they are tempted. And *fourthly*, He has suffered death on the cross, to vindicate the honour of God's laws, to show the odiousness of sin, to obtain pardon for the sincere penitent, and restore him to the favour of the Deity.

With this assistance and encouragement, therefore, we may conquer our passions, if we endeavour it in good earnest, and we have none to blame but ourselves for any misery brought upon us by our vices. What can a wicked man now plead in his own justification, when he appears before the impartial tribunal of the righteous Judge of the universe? Will he dare to affirm, that as often as his conscience remonstrated against his inclination to sin, so often, at that instant, he earnestly intreated of God, for Christ's sake, to assist him with his holy spirit to conquer the corrupt propensity of his heart? Ah no! for then the Father of mercies would have granted his request.

Almighty and most gracious God, who, of thy infinite mercy, hast sent thy Son into the world, to bring life and immortality to the clearest light, to redeem lost man, and to assure him of the assistance of thy holy spirit, under every trial and temptation, while he is sincerely determined to do his duty, and art ready, at his earnest request, to strengthen him in the practice of every virtue: since thou hast done so much for us, O let our stubborn hearts be softened by such a profusion of favours; let us, under thy protection, struggle vigorously against every appetite and passion, that would draw us aside from piety and virtue; and let us not basely betray ourselves, and court our own ruin, while thou graciously desirest that we should repent, amend, and be for ever happy.

IX. OF REPENTANCE.

WE are commanded to repent of our past sins, and amend our lives if we expect admittance into the kingdom of God, which may be truly and literally said to be near to every individual now living upon earth, because the day of death will quickly overtake every one of us, and fix our doom for ever.

The word, *repentance*, is, in the original Greek of the New Testament called *μετάνοια*, which signifies a thorough change of mind. When a sinner, therefore, is commanded to repent, the meaning is, that whereas, hitherto he has gone on in a course of

wickedness, he must now change his mind entirely, he must be sensible of and grieved for his former errors, and must, during the time to come of his life, proceed in a new and contrary course of righteousness.

The necessity of this change of mind will evidently appear, if we reflect on the infinite holiness of God; on the purity and piety of angels; on the sanctity and benevolence of the spirits of good men, who inhabit the regions of bliss and immortality. How absurd and unnatural must it be to imagine, that creatures immersed in sensuality and voluptuousness, tainted with envy, hatred, and malice, habituated to pride, covetousness, and lying, or delighted with the practice of fraud, cruelty, and revenge, should be admitted citizens of the *new Jerusalem, wherein dwelleth righteousness*, and in which *any thing that defileth shall in no ways enter*! But suppose sinners should be admitted, without a sincere reformation of mind, what must be the consequence? If we seriously consider the refined pleasures, and transcendent joys of those blessed regions, which consist in conversing, and having an intimacy with angels and blessed spirits, full of knowledge, benevolence, purity and integrity; and in being received into the presence of God, to contemplate his perfections, and to imitate, in a manner adapted to our faculties, his holiness, goodness and truth; how can we imagine it possible, that an unreformed sinner should be properly qualified to partake of, or delight in such entertainments?

Shall it be said, that the Almighty will himself change their minds instantaneously, and make habitual sinners become holy in a moment, without any previous repentance? We do not dispute the omnipotence of God, or that he can *from stones raise up children to Abraham*. But if it be probable that God ever will, by an act of power, change an impenitent sinner into a saint, why are we desired to *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*? Why are we commanded by God to *be holy, for he is holy*? Why are we told, *the soul that sinneth, he shall die*? And why have we catalogues given us in scripture, of sins which are expressly declared to exclude men from the kingdom of heaven? In short, if men may commit what wickedness they please, and God will nevertheless make them holy in an instant, without any previous repentance, it will follow, that all those precepts which recommend the practice of piety and virtue, are at best, useless, and might very well be spared.

It was the opinion of the Heathen philosophers, that the joys of the Elysian fields consisted principally in men's diverting themselves with the same amusements, and in partaking of the same entertainments which give them the highest pleasure in this world. And Mohammed's Paradise differs very little from the Pagan Elysium. But how gross soever these notions be, they plainly intimate, that it was natural to imagine, that the habits with which men left this world, should remain with them in the next, and according as these habits were virtuous or criminal,

should there become their torment or felicity. And though the joys of heaven, which the Christian religion has revealed, are infinitely more pure, refined and perfect, than those which the Heathens or Mohammedans have imagined, yet still our religion teaches us, that we must be initiated into these joys on earth, before we can possess or relish them in heaven; that is, we must endeavour to practise holiness, righteousness, charity, and every other virtue here, before we can hope to take delight in the practice of them hereafter, since, in the perfection and universality of piety and virtue, the pleasures of those happy mansions do, in a great measure consist. From this we plainly perceive, that the commandment which enjoins us repentance, (like all other commandments of God) is calculated purely for our own benefit, because, without this obedience, we exclude ourselves from that felicity, which Christ has purchased for us, and which is offered to us on the conditions of the gospel.

But farther, repentance is not only calculated for our benefit, we have also great encouragement to the practice of it, by the earnest invitation which our merciful Father gives us to return to him from the error of our ways: *Cast away all your transgressions and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, says the Lord God, wherefore turn yourselves and live.* Again, *If the wicked man will turn from all his sins that he has committed, and keep all my statutes, he shall surely live, and his transgressions that he has committed shall*

not be mentioned unto him. Add to this, the declaration made in the gospel, that there is joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth; and also the example of the prodigal son: both which are amazing instances of the goodness and compassion of our heavenly Father, and, to a mind susceptible of gratitude, an irresistible inducement to repentance.

Merciful God! shall we be such desperate enemies to ourselves, and so fatally negligent of our own happiness, as to slight this commandment, of changing our heedless and vicious course of life, and returning to thee, while yet it is in our power to rescue ourselves from everlasting misery.

And now to bring this doctrine of repentance home to myself: What have I to plead in excuse for my sins, and for my backwardness to repent and amend? How often hast thou, my Father and my God, by heaping thy favours upon me, invited me to taste and see that thou art gracious! While at the same time, the stubbornness of my passions and appetites, and the allurements of sin, have made me cold and backward in thy service! I should probably have perished in the foolish indulgence of these appetites and passions, if thou, of thy infinite compassion, hadst not been pleased to spare me, until age and reflexion have, in some measure, abated their power over my reason. And shall I, to the last, make a bad use of all thy favours? Shall I now, instead of the mad pranks and follies of youth, adopt the crafty and over-reaching sins of age? Forsake me not, O my gracious Lord, when I am old and grey-headed.

I have been estranged from thee too long; let me now draw near to thee with a fixed resolution, never to depart from my duty for the future. Let shame and grief, for my former transgressions, possess my soul with an abhorrence against every deviation from my duty in time coming. Let the remembrance of thy mercies inspire my soul with gratitude to thee, my great benefactor; and let my hope, through Christ, of thy acceptance of my service, (miserable as it is, and wretched, alas! as the offerings of a frail heart are still likely to be) determine my soul to serve thee, if not perfectly, yet, at least sincerely, during the short remainder of my continuance in a vain and vicious world.

X. OF HEAVEN.

THOUGH the Almighty is present every where, and is not far from any of us, as *in him we live, move, and have our being*, yet his operations on earth are invisible to mortal eyes. *Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand where he does work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him**. Heaven is the place where he displays his glory, and manifests himself openly to his servants. It will also be the final and everlasting abode of just men made perfect, where their joys will be complete beyond the utmost extent of their hopes or wishes. Those blessed souls which

* Job. xxiii. 8, 9.

adhered to the commandments of God, in spite of all the temptations and snares of a wicked world, and ran with patience the race that was set before them, are there, through the merits and intercession of the Redeemer of mankind, rewarded with everlasting felicity and glory. O wretched and foolish heart ! wilt thou forfeit this prospect of happiness for the sake of gratifying an unruly appetite, a corrupt passion, or an ill-judged affection, for any thing that this transitory life can afford ? Can any society be equal to that of angels ? Can any felicity be conceived so great, as that of being admitted into the presence and favour of God ? And (to speak of joys less sublime and more familiar to our narrow apprehensions) what charms will it not add to the heavenly mansions, to enjoy the innocent and entertaining conversation of those great men, who, in all ages, have made themselves renowned for virtue, genius, and knowledge ? especially as those extraordinary qualities are then discovered pure and unmixed with vice or error. What a heightening it is to this entertainment, that envy, hatred, and malice, so detestable and mischievous on earth, are now no more, and that their place is supplied by love, sincerity and universal beneficence. Here poverty, sickness, and pain are unknown, where prosperity, vigour, and ease reign for ever ! Moroseness and peevishness are excluded, while cheerfulness and complacency adorn every mind. Fraud, falsehood, and oppression are all strangers, in a region where goodness, justice, and uprightness dwell in every heart ; where joy smiles in every eye,

and glory crowns every head ; and where (in the intervals of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, offered to the majesty of the Supreme Being) a free and familiar conversation with angels, saints, and ever blessed friends, enlarges, ennobles, and exalts the soul.

XI.—OF PRAYER.

WHEN we consider our natural dependence on God, who created us, who preserves us, who supplies all our wants here, and from whom alone we expect happiness hereafter, there cannot be a more valuable privilege conferred upon us, than to have daily and hourly access to this great and gracious Being, to be permitted to lay all our complaints before him, and to offer our supplications to him for relief. But happily for us, we are not only permitted, we are also invited and exhorted to pray to him, and assured, that he who seeketh shall find, and that to him who knocketh, it shall be opened. That it is our highest honour, and the greatest mercy that can be showed to us, to be thus required to address God, we shall easily apprehend, if, on the one hand, we consider his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness ; and, on the other hand, our own weakness, ignorance, and wretchedness ; that we are the lowest of all the rational creation, and that by sin we have made ourselves *miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*

But why should we pray, since God knows our wants before we ask, and our ignorance in asking.

and since his goodness is infinite towards his creatures, and ready to supply all their necessities? I answer, 1. Because God commands us to pray, and what are we, that we should dispute his orders? 2. To pray, shows that we are sensible of our wants and of our dependence, which should make us more earnest in asking assistance, and more thankful when it is obtained.

What is prayer? Prayer is a devout lifting up of our souls to God in faith and hope, to implore his blessing, and comprehends adoration, confession, petition and thanksgiving.

As to adoration, what can be more reasonable, or becoming our condition, than to adore him to whom we owe all our comforts? That Eternal Being, of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, from whom we derive our existence, and upon whom alone we depend for every good thing that we either enjoy or expect. The thought is boundless! For whether we contemplate the ineffable perfection of the Deity, or our own pitiable indigence, a thousand reasons crowd in upon us, which engage us to thank, to praise, and to adore our Friend, our Father, and our God.

A second part of prayer is confession. How can we expect forgiveness of our sins, unless we are sensible of them? And if we are sensible that we have offended, our next step is to be sorry for them, to take shame to ourselves, to confess our trespasses ingenuously before our Master whom we have offended, to implore his pardon, for the sake of our

Redeemer, and resolve, with the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to sin no more. Since he, who knows our frailty, has been graciously pleased to accept of our repentance, instead of unfinning obedience, which is not in our power, shall we endeavour to hide those sins of which we are determined to repent? No, surely; we must acknowledge our faults before we can be in a disposition to amend. It is true, that God, in whose presence we commit all our wickedness, knows them perfectly without our confession; but it is also true, that God requires our acknowledgement, not to inform him of our guilt, but to testify our contrition, and our desire to return from a course of unrighteousness and misery, into the road of virtue and happiness.

Prayer, in the third place, comprehends petition, according to that excellent pattern set before us by our Lord, in which there are four petitions; 1. Give us this day our daily bread. 2. Forgive us our trespasses. 3. Lead us not into temptation. 4. Deliver us from evil. The reasonableness and necessity of these petitions are obvious to the slightest consideration. 1. Give us this day our daily bread. There is no man, from the king who sits on the throne, to the beggar who lies in the street, but stands in need of preferring this petition. Suppose a man ever so rich, he cannot eat his silver or gold, or clothe himself with his woods or fields; and unless the Almighty vouchsafes to crown the year with his blessing, there will neither be bread to eat, nor wool or flax to clothe the greatest among mankind. La-

mentable, therefore, is the vanity of that fool, who fancies himself independent of God in any respect, since the highest and haughtiest man on earth, (however his pride and ignorance may prompt him to think otherwise) depends on God for his daily subsistence, as much as the beasts of the field, and the fishes of the sea, who all *wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season.*

The second petition, Forgive us our trespasses, is not less necessary to be preferred. As, on the one hand, we sin daily against God, and the imaginations of our hearts are evil continually; and since, on the other hand, God is holy, and hates sin: it follows, that we must be either punished for our iniquities, or obtain forgiveness of them on the conditions proposed in the gospel.

As to the third petition, Lead us not into temptation. When we reflect on our situation in this world, and the many obstructions we meet with in the road to virtue, we have great reason to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. We find, from sad experience, that the enticements of the world, from without, are laying continual snares for us, to make us prefer pleasure, profit or power, to our duty; while our appetites and passions from within, are ready to betray, and give us up to their delusion: what can a wretch do, therefore, who is destitute of God's assistance to protect him from such powerful adversaries? Is he not like a ship in a tempest without a pilot, ready to be dashed to pieces by the first rock or bank that comes in his way?

The fourth petition, Deliver us from evil, is also indispensibly required to be offered up in our daily prayers. What a dreadful number of moral and natural evils do continually surround us, which we can neither foresee nor prevent ! And where can we be secure from their attacks, but under the protection of that Being of infinite goodness and power, who is able and willing to assist us, if we make him our sole dependence ?

In the last place, prayer comprehends thanksgiving. If food and raiment, health and liberty, the use of reason, and sense of religion, the prospect of felicity and every blessing which we enjoy here, or hope for hereafter, can fill our hearts with gratitude to the source from which we derive them all, ought we not to bless and magnify the glorious name of God, and to have his praise perpetually in our hearts and mouths ?

O most holy and merciful God, slow to anger, and of great kindness, I have sinned, what shall I say unto thee, O thou preserver of men ? If thou wilt contend with me, I cannot answer one of a thousand. I am ashamed to lift up my face unto thee. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy great goodness, according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine iniquities. And let the sufferings of thy beloved son atone for my trespasses. Lead me for my Redeemer's sake, O lead me in the way everlasting. Teach me to do the thing that pleases thee, for thou art my God. Guide me with thy counsel here, and after that receive me with

mercy. Forsake me not when I am old and grey headed, but conduct me by thy Holy Spirit through the few steps which yet remain of my passage to that eternal place, where temptation, sin, sorrow, and death are unknown. Let thy kingdom of universal righteousness, charity, holiness and happiness come; and let thy blessed will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Be gracious to all in distress, O Father of the universe, and let every knee bow to thee, every tongue confess to thee, and every heart adore thee, and let the earth be full of the knowledge and praise of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

XII. OF THE WORKS OF CREATION AND PROVIDENCE.

IT is impossible to observe what passes in the natural or moral world, without acknowledging the wonderful power and wisdom of God in the creation of the one, and the government of the other. Why does the sun move annually in the ecliptic, and not in the equator? Is it not to give thereby a comfortable vicissitude of cold and heat, of winter and summer to the earth; and, by that means, to bestow food and health on all its inhabitants? For winter*, though it seems desolating to the inattentive, is nevertheless happily employed, in replenishing the soil with materials for vegetation, necessary to the productions of the following seasons, which, by their gradual heat, bring the fruits of the earth to their

* See essay on the theory of agriculture.

proper growth and ripeness. Why is the ocean agitated with a never ceasing flux and reflux? Is it not to prevent its waters from stagnating and growing putrid, and thereby destroying not only all the living creatures within it, but also all that are near it, as far as the noisome stench, and pestiferous infection could extend? Why rolls the earth every day on its axis? The merciful appointment of God, in order to apply its several parts, successively, to the enlivening rays of the sun, which cherish all its inhabitants, and produce such an endless variety of provisions for their subsistence. Why do the fixed stars seem, like so many suns, to animate their respective systems, through the immense bounds of space? Do they not set forth to every discerning eye, the infinite power, glory, and omnipresence of the Creator? And do not the respective inhabitants of these systems seem all to partake of his fatherly goodness? But to describe worthily the majesty and wisdom of the Almighty in his works, great or small, is above the reach of the human mind; as we see, that every year, and every day, for ages past, have to the diligent inquirer, discovered new beauties in them all; and will, for ages to come, still discover new beauties and wonders, until the inquiry ceases, or time shall be no more. For, are they not all contrived with such amazing powers and springs of action, so properly adjusted to their respective natures, that they must for ever declare the incomprehensible wisdom of the maker, and

perpetually raise the admiration of all diligent and judicious observers?

Nor are the wisdom and goodness of God less conspicuous in his moral government of the world, than in its first production. Having made man capable of happiness, he has given him all imaginable encouragement to attain that happiness. He has enabled every soul clearly to discern the essential and eternal difference between moral good and evil. He has endowed him with freedom of will, to choose the one, and refuse the other. He has promised endless felicity to those who will pursue a course of virtue, and has denounced a perpetual misery to such as will persist in wickedness. The precepts which we are commanded to observe and practise, all naturally tend to promote our peace and satisfaction here, as well as our endless beatitude hereafter. He has comforted man under his natural frailties and infirmities, by accepting repentance and amendment, instead of unfinning obedience, for the sake of the atonement made for sin by the Redeemer of the universe. He has promised the aid of his Spirit to those who sincerely endeavour to serve him. He exhorts them to offer up their prayers to him for a daily supply of all their wants, with assurances, that he will effectually relieve them, by doing always what will tend most to the advantage of the sincere and upright petitioner. Add to this, that he has planted conscience in the soul, to sting man with remorse upon committing wickedness, but to give serenity, peace and joy to him, who has performed his duty.

Lastly, as to a particular providence over individuals, a slight attention to what happens, either to one's self, or one's acquaintance, every day cannot fail to exhibit many signal proofs of God's immediate care over every single creature in the universe, and of the truth of what the gospel declares, that he clothes the grass of the field, and not a sparrow is forgotten before him. What others have observed, I know not; but as to myself, so many and so various have been the mercies, which in every period of my life, I received from my gracious God, that I have not words sufficient to express my thankfulness.

XIII. CONCERNING SEVERAL VICES OF WHICH MEN ARE DAILY GUILTY, WITHOUT ATTENDING TO THE HEINOUSNESS OF THEM.

SOME of these vices are uncleanness, covetousness, anger, calumny, revenge, envy, pride, lying, intemperance, loss of time, neglect of duty, repining at the dispensations of Providence, fretfulness, ingratitude, deceiving in small things, and a heart not upright with God: all which I shall briefly consider in the order here laid down.

In committing uncleanness, you multiply sin, by ensnaring the innocent, and when once you have debauched and ruined them, it is out of your power to reclaim them, or make them sufficient reparation for the guilt into which you have drawn them. Thus

you bring an accumulated guilt upon your own head, for which you stand accountable to the great Judge of the universe. In what manner can you atone for that multiplication of sin? Let us suppose, that by repentance and amendment, you should obtain pardon for yourself, yet the other party may persist in vice, to which you pointed the way: and would it not make your heart tremble, and fill you with terror and amazement, to reflect, that for a momentary gratification, you have been the cause of infinite misery to a creature, made after the image of God, which might have continued innocent, had not your fatal temptation intervened.

Covetousness is idolatry, by which you affront the Almighty, because you give that attention and pay that assiduous service to mammon, which is due to God only. It is also frequently productive of great distress to your neighbour, for which you must make him a reparation, or expect to be proportionably punished, whether you have got possession of his substance, either by fraud, or by violence. And should it not make the heart of the covetous man tremble, to think how he is represented by the Holy Spirit, who calls him *the covetous whom God abhorreth!*

Wrath is like an unruly horse, which you must curb and keep in with a strong bridle, for if once you give him his head, he may run away with you to your destruction. Or, it is like fire, from which you must keep at a distance, for if it once seizes

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upon you, it may burn you to ashes. Be cautious therefore, and when you first perceive your choler or indignation to be moved, flee and make your escape to God for protection, and implore his aid, that it may not fasten upon you suddenly. Your own reason, if you will consult it, will teach you the necessity of this caution and retreat. Since, therefore, you know the consequence, check your passion by all means possible, and parry the danger.

Calumny is both foolish and wicked; it does no good to the reviler, nor works any reformation in the reviled. This sin proceeds most frequently from malice, which is odious to the Deity: so that, in committing it, you offend the great Lord and Father of the universe, without doing the least good, either to yourself, or to another.

Revenge is inconsistent with peace here, or hereafter. In contriving the means of executing vengeance, you lose your inward satisfaction and tranquillity of mind; and in resolving not to forgive your enemies, according to God's positive command, you forfeit your claim to that pardon of your own trespasses, which is promised to those only who forgive the injuries done to themselves. Is there any degree of wisdom in this behaviour? You will not forgive an hundred pence to your fellow servant, but execute your revenge, and take him by the throat, until he pays the debt, regardless, at the same time, of the ten thousand talents you owe to your master, who, at your humble request, would have compassion on you, if your unrelenting cruelty to another had not obstructed his mercy.

Envy is both an impious and audacious vice. To be dissatisfied with the distribution that the wise Father of the universe makes of the good things of this world, which are all his own property, and which, for excellent reasons, he dispenses to different persons, in various proportions, looks like calling him to account for his government, as if frail man could have ordered things better, and made a more equitable partition. Shocking blasphemy! What impiety and impudence is this! and yet to envy our neighbour for the favours which God has bestowed upon him, is to arraign Providence as partial to him, and regardless of our extraordinary merit, of which we ourselves entertain a high and groundless opinion.

Pride is a silly unnatural vice, and was not made for man who sprang from the dust. What has he to be proud of? Is birth, beauty, or bodily strength, a just cause for pride? As to birth, is it not more honourable to work out one's own dignity, and derive his esteem in the world from virtue and merit, than to be the degenerate offspring of an illustrious family? The triumph of strength or beauty is but of a short duration, and gives no ground for pride. A sharp fit of sickness will soon demolish both; or, should they escape such a stroke, the course of a few years will be sure to complete their ruin. Have we any greater reason to be proud of our intellectual faculties, which are equally liable with our bodies to decay, and even to perish by a thousand accidents? If a man has good moral qualities, these surely ought not to swell his pride; for whoever fe-

riously examines his own heart, and the past actions of his life, will, in the progress of that examination, find much greater cause for shame and confusion of face, than for pride and arrogance.

Lying is an infamous debasing sin, that brings shame and reproach upon the liar; and acts in direct opposition to the plain purpose of God, in giving the use of speech to man, which was, that thereby he might communicate his real and genuine thoughts to his neighbour. If a lie is told on purpose to deceive, the guilt is doubled, by the conjunction of fraud with falsehood. If it proceeds from vanity, to magnify one's self, it rarely answers the purpose of the liar, because a custom of lying sinks a man into a contemptible wretch, and all that he affirms goes for nothing. In short, it is a vile unmanly vice, introducing confusion (as far as the influence of the liar reaches) into the moral government of the world, odious to God, and among men particularly disgraceful.

Intemperance comprehends every excess in eating or drinking, and indulging our appetites or passions, which in any measure disorders the mind or body, or renders either of them unfit to serve God, our neighbours, or ourselves. The pleasure of eating or drinking lasts no longer than until our natural appetite for them is satisfied, which is always within the bounds of moderation: but to eat or drink more than answers the purpose of refreshment, is a brutal indulgence that wastes the good creatures of God, exposes us to distempers and infamy, and

plainly proves us unworthy of that reason by which we are distinguished from the brute creation; and all excesses of different kinds are equally pernicious.

Loss of time is a fatal error. This world is our state of trial. If we employ our continuance here as we ought to do, we shall meet with a gracious reception hereafter; but if we mispend and trifle it away, there is no calling the time back again; we shall have cause for ever to lament that we have not made a better use of it. When a man is near his end, and ready to appear before the tribunal of God, to give an account of his actions, what would he not give for a reprieve of a few days of health, to prepare himself, by serious repentance and amendment, for such an appearance? Why will he therefore unhappily lose his time, while yet he has it in his power to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.

To neglect our duty of praise and adoration to God is an ungrateful and foolish sin. Our whole dependence is upon him, and if he should withdraw his protection but for a moment, we are undone. He requires not all our attention, or all our time, but only that our hearts should be sincere and upright in our attachment to him. And, if we have any true sense of his goodness, and of our own wants and weakness, we ought to rejoice in the privilege of being permitted to adore his perfections, and to implore his protection and mercy.

To repine at the dispensations of providence is a complicated sin, more enormous than is commonly

imagined. 1. It includes pride, and a high conceit of our own merit, as if we thought ourselves overlooked or neglected, while those we fancy our inferiors are more regarded. 2. It censures the wisdom and justice of God in the government of the world, as if he was partial in his distributions, and did not pay a sufficient regard to persons of our importance. Detestable vanity! 3. It argues a fretful, discontented, ungrateful spirit, a frame of mind which excludes peace and contentment wherever it has taken possession: so that this sin of repining, comprehends pride, audaciousness, impiety, ingratitude, and a peevishness inconsistent with any degree of felicity.

Fretfulness is also a heinous complicated guilt. It is a mixture of pride and impatience. We think ourselves such curiosities, that every thing should be subservient to our humours; and when any thing happens to obstruct our profit or pleasure, our indignation is presently raised, be the obstruction ever so harmless, and we treat it with scorn and insolence. Did the great God, who sees our folly and madness, treat us as we do our fellow creatures, with contempt and disdain, what miserable, unhappy wretches must we be? And how dare we take the liberty to insult or abuse persons much more valuable, perhaps, in the sight of God than ourselves?

Ingratitude is reckoned such an odious vice, even among sinful creatures like ourselves, that he who is guilty of it, is thought capable of any wickedness.

But what is our ingratitude to man, compared with our ingratitude to the Almighty? To desert from, or rebel against him, from whom we have our being, and every blessing we enjoy, is a most deplorable infatuation. Ought not a generous mind rather suffer any affliction, than run the risk of wilfully offending so much condescension and goodness, which is still ready to receive men upon their repentance and amendment, notwithstanding their former baseness and unthankfulness?

To deceive in small things, shows a corrupt heart; and he who will give himself the liberty to deceive in small matters, would undoubtedly deceive in the greatest, because they bring more gain, if he were not afraid that great frauds would be more carefully inquired into, and sooner discovered to his confusion and ruin. For, as he is not influenced by any principle of regard to God, who sees all he does, but only by the fear of shame and temporary punishment, he is full as guilty who cheats in a trifle, as he who defrauds in a matter of great consequence. All the difference seems to be, that the loss is not so great to the person injured, but still the badness of heart in the deceiver is equally unjustifiable.

A heart not upright with God, is a heart divided between God and mammon: a heart, which, like the Roman senate under Tiberius, would add Christ to the number of their gods, but would worship all their other false deities at the same time. He is called a jealous God, and requires the whole heart,

and surely a heart fixed on any idol is not worth his acceptance.

A thousand reasons, if we were capable of reflecting wisely would determine us to serve and worship him alone, with sincerity and faithfulness; and let us not deceive ourselves, he will not be mocked, and can never be pleased with partial service. O my gracious God, let me never hesitate between my duty to thee, and the delusion of my appetites and passions; let my heart be honest, pure, and constant, in an universal obedience and resignation to thy holy will, all the days of my life.

XIV. OF CHRISTIANITY.

FOR my part, I see in the Christian system such evident marks of truth, probity and goodness, and such proofs of the approbation of the Deity, that I must believe it came from heaven.

In the first place, the attributes of the Almighty, as they are plainly set forth in this system, and the sincerity with which man is directed to worship him in spirit and in truth, are worthy of the ruler of the universe; which, so far as I know, cannot be said of any other religion. Besides, the precepts given in the gospel, for the conduct of our lives, have all of them a natural tendency to secure our peace and happiness throughout the whole duration of our existence.

In the next place, the many beneficent miracles

performed publicly by Jesus Christ and his apostles, in confirmation of their mission, are, to my apprehension, a sure testimony of the approbation of God, without whose immediate power they could not be performed. But especially the resurrection of our Lord* (which is proved by a stronger and fuller evidence than perhaps any matter of fact ever was) is a demonstration that he was sent by God; for sure, no man will say, that the Almighty would enter into a collusion with an impostor, and exert his omnipotence to give sanction to a lie.

Again, our Saviour's prediction of his own death and resurrection; of the descent of the Holy Ghost; of the conversion of the Gentiles; of the calamities of the Jews; the total destruction of their city, temple, and government; which we know at this day to have been all completely verified, were, at the time they happened, an irresistible, and still continue a permanent demonstration of his divine mission. Lastly, I can see no worldly interest, or selfish views of riches, honour, pleasure, or power, pursued by Jesus Christ, or his apostles, or by the primitive Christians; but, on the contrary, I find them meekly and patiently suffering all manner of hardships and cruelties for the sake of truth, and for the benefit of mankind.

O most gracious God, as I am guilty of many grievous sins, for which I have no excuse to plead,

* See Priestly's Evidence of Revealed Religion, 11th Discourse.

and can make no restitution, what hope of pardon can I entertain but through the merits of Christ, and upon the conditions of the gospel? I owed unfinning obedience to my Maker, but that law I have broken, and thereby forfeited my claim to his favour. Without mercy I must be for ever miserable; but where shall I find that mercy? I perceive by the Christian system, O my God, that thou hast sent thy Son to the world, to offer his life a sacrifice for sin, and to reconcile man to thee: for this revelation of thy will, and for the inestimable benefit thereby accruing to mankind, I humbly desire to magnify and adore thy name for ever. I desire also to embrace the conditions of the gospel to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, to the utmost of my power, and to rely on the satisfaction made by my Redeemer for that mercy which I myself could never merit. O let all my past sins, for which I sincerely ask thy pardon, be washed away by the blood of the Lamb of God, and give me the aid of thy blessed Spirit, to root out of my heart all sinful and corrupt affections, and to implant in their room, all those devout and pious dispositions that become the worshippers of the holy Jesus. Lord Jesu, receive my spirit, and let me meet with a gracious reception at thy tribunal.

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1 NO 61

E S S A Y
ON THE
HAPPINESS
OF
THE LIFE TO COME.

..... What if Earth
Be but the shadow of Heaven, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought.
MILTON.



B O S T O N :
PRINTED AND SOLD BY WILLIAM SPOTSWOOD,
NO. 55 MARLBOROUGH-STREET.

1796.



P R E F A C E.

THE following Essay is extracted from a French book, entitled “*Essai sur la Felicité de la Vie à venir*, par C. L. de Villette.” The Translator has selected those parts alone which seemed most calculated to awaken such ideas of the life to come, as it appears to have been the Author’s principal aim to produce; and has ventured to make some alterations and additions.

To familiarize the joys of heaven to our imagination, without degrading them by too close a comparison with our present pleasures;—to place them in such a point of view, as to warm the heart without dazzling the understanding;—to represent our occupations in the celestial abodes, as holding such affinity with our earthly pursuits, that, in order to be admitted to the privileges of the former, we must observe the strictest rectitude in the objects of the latter;—to direct our views in every event beyond the narrow bounds of time, to a happy eternity, where that which is in part shall be swallowed up in that which is perfect;—these are the views of the Translator, as they evidently were those of the Author.

PREFACE.

It must indeed be acknowledged, that, after all our endeavours to describe the joys of heaven, our mortal understanding can never acquire an adequate idea of that glorious state, in which we shall be partakers of the divine nature, and be conformed to the image of Christ. But nothing surely can so effectually detach us from low pursuits, and unworthy inclinations, or inspire the true Christian with gratitude and moderation in prosperity, with resignation and fortitude in adversity, with humble and ardent piety, universal benevolence, and every virtue becoming a being destined for immortality, and a professor of the gospel of Christ, as the habit of reflecting on those superior enjoyments which the soul will experience, when, the veil of mortality being withdrawn, we shall see God "face to face," and partake of that "fulness of joy," which is in his presence for evermore.

INTRODUCTION.

TO prove the superiority of our immortal to our mortal state; to assert that the body will be purified by death from its natural imperfections, and be raised spiritual and perfect, and that the faculties of the soul will acquire a nearer resemblance to that pure spirit from whom they proceed, would be an useless attempt; since to those who examine the words of eternal life, these truths are incontestibly evident. But what the changes will be, which shall then take place in us, is seldom inquired; and they are by many people considered as inconceivable, not only in their degree, but in their nature also. That with regard to the former, they far exceed all which we can imagine, is clear from the words of Scripture: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.* Beloved, now are we the sons of God: but it doth not yet appear what we shall be."† But I

* 1 Cor. ii. 9. Isaiah lxiv. 4.

† 1 John iii. 2. See also 2 Cor. xii. 2.

apply these passages to their degree alone ; and it is the object of the following Essay to prove, that the knowledge we have of the nature of the universe, and of the ways of God, as revealed to us in the gospel, may furnish us with strong reasons to be persuaded, that we shall possess in heaven our present faculties, and enjoy many of our present pleasures, though improved and refined beyond all human conception.

It may be alleged, that an acquaintance with the nature of that happiness, which we hope to enjoy in a future state, is of no importance to us, provided it really merits the most ardent desires of a rational creature ; and that a perfect conviction, that he who knows and has power over all, will render us happy, forms a motive more than sufficient to induce us to undertake every thing, to sacrifice every thing, in obedience to his commands. Yet, if he permits us to discover, in some degree, what those rewards are which “ he hath prepared for them that love him,” our imagination will come in aid of our duty, and we shall meditate with transport on the scenes of future bliss, which in those moments of elevation, when the heart is lifted up to the Fountain of Happiness, we may in some measure be said to anticipate. But, on the other hand, too distinct a view of the celestial regions would be productive of many evils. It would render this world a state of misery, by the impatience it would raise in us to arrive at that period, when mortality

shall be swallowed up of life. Besides, our imagination, being thus forcibly captivated with such an enchanting prospect, must almost deprive us of the freedom of action in our pursuit of virtue. The motives to persevere in the great work of our salvation would be so strongly impressed on our minds, that those painful exertions which constitute our virtue, those trials which prove its constancy, would no longer deserve these titles; and we should derive no merit from actions, the rewards of which were set before us in a light too powerful to resist. This would destroy the source of one of our greatest pleasures.

We frequently complain of the difficulties attendant on all our attainments, both mental and corporeal; yet it may be easily proved, that in most cases this pretended cause for complaint ought to be a subject of gratitude. In every situation the Creator has provided for us a satisfaction and joy, resulting from our free agency, and from our own exertions. Even in our most trifling amusements, and yet more in those things on which our happiness principally depends, we could not be deprived of the privilege of deliberating, choosing, and acting with freedom, without losing what is most solid and precious in the benefits bestowed on us. Yet God, through the greatness of his mercy, has offered to our researches such an insight into the glories of his presence, as to induce us ardently to desire "an inheritance among the saints in light."

It is evident, from experience, that when we do

not neglect our faculties, the knowledge we acquire, the virtuous affections, the happy inclinations, the laudable habits, which we fortify, are far more powerful than the counterpoise of criminal desires; and that our ideas of the great God, when we are frequently occupied in contemplating him, triumph considerably over all those in which the most fertile imagination can paint the objects of this world. If we have not too often, and too long, lost sight of these august ideas, they restrain the violence of our most impetuous passions, and divert the current of our most dangerous inclinations; 'till, by degrees, they change our whole heart, re-establish all our good dispositions, and plant virtue in all those secret recesses where vice had flourished before.

If it be true, that from our entrance into the world, from the commencement of our discipline, every thing points out to us the way of true felicity, and that, if at the first step we take the right path, every thing engages and encourages us more and more to pursue it; it is true also, (and it is a very remarkable and a very consoling observation) that God, infinitely wise and good, has hazarded our happiness no farther than was necessary to preserve our free-agency, the soul of all enjoyment.

It follows then, that thus supported by a sure and certain hope, we may be enabled to *endure* with patience *unto the end* all those trials of mortality which shall be succeeded by eternal happiness.* Let us sup-

* Matth. xxiv. 13; & xxv. 46. Rom. ii. 7.

pose all the evils we can suffer to be collected over us, those at least which we do not bring upon ourselves, they would occupy only a very small part of our life; they do not arrive altogether; they are blended with many comforts; they may be constantly alleviated by the pleasure of self-approbation, by the sentiment of an affectionate obedience, of an humble resignation, to the will of that adorable Being whom we love with our whole soul; and they are almost absorbed in that faith, which is as an anticipated possession of "things hoped for."*

St. Peter lays it down as an evident fact, that a faithful christian is also joyful. He does not say to those to whom he addresses his epistle,—In believing on the Son of God I beseech you rejoice,—but, "Ye do rejoice with joy unspeakable;"† and it ought to be remarked, that at the time in which St. Peter wrote to them in this manner, they were threatened with various evils, from the absolute power of the Gentiles, and the implacable fury of the Jews.

In the moments of attentive meditation, a christian cannot be insensible to the mercies of God in his beloved Son; and if he has not one of those extraordinary dispositions which nothing can move, he must be strongly affected by them. If we could constantly preserve this happy state of mind, we should be in the most desirable situation to which we could aspire here below; but this is not the case: the christian, so lately penetrated with celestial joy,

* Heb. xi. 1.

† 1 Pet. i. 8.

again becomes a feeble mortal, who mourns and rejoices for trifles. In spite of the resistance of the understanding, in spite of the ascendancy of the sublimest sentiments, the mechanism of our body, its unforeseen disorders, produce unhappy variations, which an over-strained severity regards as incompatible with zealous piety and solid virtue. Yet these humiliating inconsistencies will not prove that we do not love our heavenly Father and merciful Redeemer, that we do not trust and rejoice in him; but these glorious sentiments require to be frequently awakened, extended, and more firmly established.

Our natural eagerness after present pleasures, which so often leads us into folly, forms on this occasion a motive to employ all our cares, all our efforts, to perfect this important work. The tranquillity, the state of peace and contentment, which I have just mentioned, is an immediate actual blessing, and it is an inestimable one; it adds a charm to all our innocent pleasures, which infinitely surpasses their intrinsic value. Without that tranquillity, founded on an immovable basis; without that permanent satisfaction which has its source in our own bosom, and depends on no exterior object; all which the world calls pleasure is generally accompanied by a frightful train of reproaches, regrets, and afflictions; while this happy state of mind can convert the most insignificant recreation, the most trifling amusement, into a real, a considerable blessing.

The most insipid day of the man who rejoices in

God, is infinitely preferable to the most brilliant, the most fortunate day, of the ambitious or the voluptuous. But behold this man blessed from above; behold him either in “the courts of the Lord,”* or in a chosen retreat, where, abstracting his thoughts from all terrestrial objects, and inviting those which constitute the measure of his heart to appear before his soul, he fills it with celestial joy; then you will exclaim with him, and with the Psalmist, “O Lord! a day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere:”† then you will not be surprised at David’s ardent spiritual thirst after God,‡ at the unutterable aspirations of St. Paul,§ at the *unspeakable* joy of St. Peter,|| at “that peace which passeth all understanding:”¶ expressions which many regard either as poetically figurative, or as extravagancies proceeding from the warmth of an eastern imagination. It is true that the degree of this joy depends greatly upon the constitution, and upon the force and delicacy of certain faculties or qualities of the mind; consequently those who are susceptible of strong and lively emotions, would do wrong to judge from their own feelings of the reality, the sincerity, the constancy, or the piety of others; but those who cannot feel these emotions, ought not to consider as error or weakness, a sensibility so noble and so enviable.

Every one may, if I do not deceive myself, regard as moral truths the following propositions:

* Psa. lxxxiv. 2.

† Psa. lxxxiv. 10.

‡ Psa. xliii. 2.

§ Rom. viii. 23.

|| 1 Pet. i. 8.

¶ Phil. iv. 7.

First; If that joy with which we are inspired by our love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, is not with the generality of christians absolutely an *unspeakable joy*; at least it is sometimes ardent, and it almost constantly produces a state of peace, of content, to which no situation merely worldly or terrestrial can approach. Sometimes indeed it may be suspended in the confusion of business, absorbed in the anguish of affliction, or banished for some moments by the petulant impatience of a quick and warm temper; but it soon regains its ascendancy, and re-establishes a prudent tranquility. Where these effects do not appear, that christian disposition does not exist; and those who do not possess it, and yet believe that they are christians, deceive themselves, and take for real piety what has only the appearance of it; or those passions, “which war against the soul,”* obtain frequent victories over their feeble virtue, and they abandon themselves to foolish projects and hurtful desires. In this case, assuredly they cannot expect to feel that celestial joy; and the same principles which ought to produce and nourish it, will cause in its place a dejection and terrour, which even incredulity itself does not always experience. I do not mean to include those, who, with the sincerest piety, and the best dispositions, are afflicted with doubts and distractions. These are frequently owing to some corporal disorder, which oppresses the faculties of the

* 1 Pct. ii. 11.

mind, and disturbs its tranquility. Sometimes indeed the cause is unknown to us; but we may trust to that merciful Saviour, who has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* Those doubts which afflict us here, will be removed in a future state; "though now we know but in part, then shall we know even as we are known."† "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow."‡

Secondly; If we would assure ourselves that our joy is solid, that it is adequate to the greatness of its cause, that it expresses how strongly we are affected by that faith which we profess to be planted in our hearts, how deeply we are penetrated with admiration, love, gratitude, confidence, and hope; let us beware of trusting to transient emotions; they may be deceitful. We can only judge of this joy from its ordinary and constant effects. The christian in whom it dwells knows nothing, I do not only say which can equal it, but which can bear a comparison with it. He therefore makes a firm resolution to banish immediately all joy with which this is inconsistent. He knows that it has its source, not in a fruitless contemplation of the favours of the Most High, and of his great designs for the happiness of the human race, but in an active admiration, a gratitude fruitful in good works, a pure taste for, and a firm attachment to, every

* Matth. xi, 28.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

‡ Rev. xxi. 4.

thing laudable, honourable, just and amiable; in short, in employing his cares and exertions to cultivate and strengthen in himself all those noble principles of virtue which God has formed within him, and all the salutary knowledge which he has afforded him. When the least danger threatens his conscience, all the powers of his soul are exerted to avoid it. Animated also by his present happiness, he labours, not with painful efforts, but with joyful ardour, to establish and augment it; imploring that assisting grace, which will ever be vouchsafed to those who seek its aid with sincerity of heart and pious confidence. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."* He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, "the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man doeth unto me."†

* James i. 5.

† Heb. xiii. 5 and 6.

ON THE
HAPPINESS
OF THE
LIFE TO COME.

PART I.

IN a comparative view of our present and future state of existence, my observations will be chiefly comprised under two heads: Knowledge and Sentiment ; the first relative to the powers of the understanding, the second to the affections of the heart. I shall first enlarge on the imperfections of these faculties, and of the pleasures which we derive from them in this life ; and then endeavour to explain what their improvements will probably be in that which is to come. I begin with the powers of the understanding.

The positive evils which attend our progress through this state of trial are sensibly felt by every human being. Pain and sickness, sorrow and disappointment, are at times the lot of all ; but there are sufferings of a different kind, of which the most cultivated minds are most susceptible, as they are

perceived and felt in proportion to the delicacy of our taste, and the improvement of our mental powers.

We may place in the rank of intellectual evils the natural imperfection of our faculties. Our understanding and memory are weak, and various inevitable impediments prevent us from employing these talents to the utmost. Established errors, instructors who teach ill, or (if we are reduced to proceed without a guide) the want of proper means to inform ourselves; and various circumstances of life, which prevent us from attaining those acquirements for which we have the greatest inclination; in a word, innumerable accidents, and unfavourable events, either turns us aside from the truth, or permit us to discern it only through an obscure and perplexing medium.

If any person should be surprised that there are so few people in the world who make a progress in elegant and useful knowledge, I intreat him only to consider how rare is the advantage of an uninterrupted and regular meditation; how many necessities or disorders derange or retard our researches.

By the tyranny of man also, we frequently find ourselves stopt in the career of the most sublime and interesting studies. The desire of knowledge is universal: and yet whole nations, almost all the nations of the world, shamefully enslaved by prejudice, and proud of their infatuation, persist with an invincible obstinacy in a dark and intricate path, and frequently only advance further into error; or,

perhaps, satisfied with the labours of their predecessors, and abandoning themselves to an unmanly indolence, they inquire no further: they know already all which they desire. Not content with indulging this unworthy inactivity, they oppose the exertions of those noble individuals, who, animated by an ardent love of truth, dare to shake off such dishonourable and dangerous fetters, and endeavour to deliver others from them.

We may rank amongst mental evils those which, from the natural influence of the body upon the mind, are occasioned by corporeal disorders. Pain and sickness not only frequently betray us into a restlessness and impatience of spirit, which it requires the strictest watch over ourselves to avoid, but often, by deranging those finer parts which more immediately act upon the mental powers, produce the most deplorable effects, and degrade the faculties of the immortal soul almost to a level with the instinct of the beasts that perish. To this we may add, that dejection of mind, that pensive sadness, the cause of which cannot be discovered either in the soul itself or in any external event; and which, therefore, can be supposed to proceed only from some corporeal derangement, which, without this grievous effect, would have remained imperceptible. We frequently see, and even more frequently than elsewhere, in these happy climates, where liberty and enlightened reason eminently prevail, persons of an excellent understanding, perfectly regular in

their manners, rich in advantages both of nature and fortune,—fall into a deep melancholy, which they pronounce to be insurmountable. Nothing gives them pleasure: every thing wearies them. But are we very certain that no afflictive event has befallen them? Yes, they themselves confess it. Every thing around smiles upon them as before. It is, therefore an internal and insensible disorder which thus affects their intellectual faculties. “The corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth upon many things. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon earth; and with labour do we find the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven who hath searched out?”*

Particular circumstances vary infinitely the evils of the mind. It is very seldom that our business, our profession, our way of life, the persons with whom we are acquainted, the country which we inhabit, the fortune, the employment, the rank which we possess, answer to our inclinations and ideas. One man, whose destiny confines him in a country almost desert, thinks continually of the happiness which the citizen of a capital enjoys: whilst the same citizen, overpowered with business, and tormented with cares, envies the peaceable retreat of the inhabitant of the country.

But our greatest evils are caused by our passions. If we yield to them in the smallest degree, they be-

* Wisdom ix. 15, 16.

come to the soul what violent paroxysms are to the body : and, however nobly we may subdue them, there is at least a time in which they make us suffer : —the time of combat.

Our desires and aversions, with regard to all kinds of advantages or evils, real or imaginary, are the sources of innumerable vexations and afflictions. They are often attended with alarms and fears, with regard both to the present life and to that which is to come.

We fear for our possessions, reputation, health, and life ; we interest ourselves for others ; we fear the same evils for them ; we place our desires on improper objects, and these desires torment us, we love what does not deserve our regard, and sooner or later we find reason to be ashamed of it ; we regret excessively an object which could but very imperfectly contribute to our happiness ; we fear that which may never happen, we hope for that which can scarcely ever happen. Ideas which strike the imagination, cause torments as real, and sometimes, more severe than the evil which we thus represent to ourselves would be in itself ; and we are punished for encouraging extravagant hopes, by the disappointments which follow them. Add to these, dissension, quarrels, jealousies, afflictions of every kind, which often, in this corrupt world, neither prudence nor probity can prevent ; and lastly, the evils of conscience, infinitely more terrible than all the rest.

Frequently it is neither to our own follies, nor to those of others, that we owe our mental evils. This is a fact which I was unwilling to confound with the preceding general reflexions. To be happy, we must have inclinations; and how often does it happen that it is not in our power to gratify them. Add to this, the well-grounded fear of many other real and inevitable evils; the actual loss of many advantages, which reason and the sweetest affections of the heart concur to render precious; and we shall confess, that the most moderate, cautious, and virtuous men, are exposed to numerous painful emotions.

Assuredly the spiritual part of our felicity (permit me to call it the health and ease of the soul) depends upon a much greater variety of circumstances, than the ease and health of the body, and its secret springs are much more delicate. In a long life, there are weeks, months, and sometimes years, which are not distinguished by any corporeal disorder; instead of which, few days pass over our heads unmarked by some mental pain or uneasiness. We may then venture to assert, that the evils of the mind are far more numerous, more various, and often much less supportable, than those of the body; and in considering them together, what could we think of the designs of the Creator, if our existence terminated with the present life?

But when "this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, when this mortal shall have put on im-

mortality,"* we shall be freed from all infirmities. Sickness and pain shall no more disturb our most useful occupations, our most innocent pleasures. Our senses being perfected to a degree of which we can at present form no idea, will convey to the soul an endless variety of delightful impressions. In the enjoyment of eternal youth and health, with our faculties and tastes in a state of continual improvement, our pleasures and our virtues will be continually increasing. Our pursuit of knowledge will no longer be attended with weariness or disgust; our virtues will no more be mixed with imperfection, nor our pleasures end in grief and disappointment. I intend to consider our comparative situation in this world and the next with a view to all these sources of enjoyment.

The pleasures most suitable to an intelligent creature, those which distinguish him from the brute, and form the essential part of his felicity, are the active pleasures: I mean those which he derives from the voluntary use of his faculties. What is it to be acquainted with an object? Assuredly it is not merely to have that idea of it which is impressed upon the soul by means of the senses, for in that case the brute would know as well or better than we do: it is when we reflect on the impression received, that we begin to *know*; that we free ourselves from the vile state of passive creatures, and rise to the honourable class of active beings: it is then, and then only,

* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

that the soul, enjoying the consciousness of its own dignity, finds in its actions a satisfaction, a variety of pleasure, which no sensation, no impression, merely as such, could possibly afford it. To reflect, to examine, is to will, to act freely ; consequently the pleasure of acquiring and possessing knowledge is an intellectual, an active pleasure ; calculated for a being endued with reason, and glorying in free-agency. A state of mental repose is not consistent with the nature of a created intelligent being. We have no sooner attained to one degree of knowledge, than we aspire to the next. If we should find our progress suddenly limited by eternal barriers, our desires would continually torment us. We cannot enough admire the extent, the delicacy, of those arrangements which God has made for our felicity. Our faculties unfold, and our acquirements increase more and more. In comparison with the impetuosity of our desires, we seem to advance but slowly, yet still we do advance. This impetuosity is rendered excusable here below, by the shortness of our life, the uncertainty of every thing human, and our own weakness. It is frequently necessary to facilitate our progress in various occupations and studies ; yet it is generally attended with some degree of uneasiness, as it induces us to aspire after the attainment of perfections, before we can arrive at them by a natural progression, and consequently occasions us many mortifications.

But such is the importance of acquiring and possessing knowledge, that the wise and benevolent

Creator impels us, almost irresistibly, to employ all our faculties in the pursuit of it. He has not only furnished us with the motive, which is produced by the idea of extensive utility annexed to such pursuits, (an idea which presents itself at first, and which opens and extends in proportion to our progress) but lest this motive should not be effectual, or should begin too late to operate on imperfect and mortal beings, he has given us a spring of action, influencing us continually from our earliest infancy ; and this is curiosity.

The human understanding, expressly calculated to acquire knowledge, and introduced into the world destitute of it, no sooner exists than it exerts itself to learn. This natural curiosity is the first spring of all the efforts we make to inform ourselves. It is so powerful, that if destitute of objects worthy of its attention, it will employ itself upon trifles. Our understanding cannot remain inactive ; that state is insupportable to it. To this it is owing, that when we have not early learnt to love those truths which are of some importance, we contract the despicable habit of sending our intellectual powers in quest of a thousand trifles, and pry into the most insignificant affairs of our neighbours.

Curiosity is an intellectual appetite, which is scarcely appeased before it presses us again ; and the pleasure of knowledge consists less in possessing than in acquiring it ; which shows the necessity of a progression in knowledge, in order to render us happy ;

and to derive from this progression all the pleasure which can result from knowledge, it is necessary that we should always preserve our free-agency, the use of our liberty, the voluntary exercise of our faculties. Our progress in knowledge is, in this case, a continual renovation of the pleasure of gratifying our intellectual appetite; and our enjoyment is increased by the flattering consideration, that it is the fruit of our own exertions.

But in order to animate us to seek after knowledge, and support us through our studies with cheerfulness, it is necessary that our exertions should not become disagreeable through too much labour; that our faculties, talents, and assistances, should always bear an exact proportion to the object in question; that a well-grounded hope of success should make every thing easy to us, just so far as that even the most attentive study may become a pleasure; that nothing should interrupt our occupations against our own inclinations; that we should have a glimpse, in the depths of infinity, of an inexhaustible fund to supply that intellectual appetite which is continually increasing; and above all, that we should be as certain of an eternal duration as we are of our own existence and of that of the Creator.

Let us consider, according to these ideas, our situation in this world with regard to knowledge; and from thence, in regulating our observations by the declarations or insinuations of the Scriptures,

we may conjecture, in some degree, what will be our situation in heaven.

In many respects our knowledge here below far exceeds what is necessary to direct us in providing for our natural wants : so much so, that if the Creator had limited our duration to the short space of human life, it would be impossible to comprehend with what design he could have given to man a capacity, which extends to innumerable speculations, not requisite for the supply of our necessities ; and this is of itself a strong proof, that the present state is only the beginning, the infancy of our existence.

On the other hand, our understanding is in some respects so weak and imperfect, that even with regard to what it is necessary to know, in order to answer all our wants, we find ourselves impeded every moment.

This ignorance, by which we are mortified and afflicted, is absolutely necessary to our state of discipline, and to the government of our Sovereign Ruler ; and in this we must admire the wisdom of the Most High ; but at present I am only to consider our knowledge itself, and certainly it is very imperfect. We must be sensible, that our efforts to penetrate into the depths of science, carry us but little beyond the outside, with regard to sublime speculations ; though our intellectual powers eagerly aspire after innumerable objects, superior to those of this world, yet in every thing we see only part of the ways and works of God. Scarcely have we

satisfied our curiosity on one point, before a thousand others present themselves, upon which we perceive with concern that we cannot satisfy it: our discoveries are never perfect, our exertions are often too fatiguing, our progress flow; in general we advance only by groping as in the dark, our pursuits are every moment interrupted, and we are often very uncertain of success. Not only the universe itself, but an insect, a plant, and even a single hair, offers to our curiosity matter for profound and often fruitless investigation. Far from being in danger of objects failing us, we are confounded by their abundance. Thousands of ages, of such a life as ours, would not suffice to glance slightly over the ten-thousandth part of them. But of what use to us is this excessive abundance, this astonishing profusion of exquisite gratifications, if we have scarcely time allowed us to taste a very few of them: unless the Creator, who places them before us, and who continually excites that appetite which he gave us, designs to bring us again to this magnificent banquet, and to allow us to enjoy it for ever?

In Heaven, through the goodness and power of Him who has created us, and who will raise us from the dead, our faculties will be endued with the precise degree of perfection requisite for our making a rapid progress in all intellectual attainments. I regard the resurrection of the body as an acknowledged fact, for I write to christians; "but we shall all

be changed ;”*, and we may reasonably suppose that change to consist, not only in a freedom from bodily infirmities, but in the attainment of a much more perfect organization. A blind man has no idea of the pleasure produced by sight, or a deaf man of the delights of harmony ; and as we know that even in this world, there are sensations of which some individuals are entirely ignorant, surely it is not unreasonable to conclude, that our glorified bodies may be endued with new modes of perception, which may convey to the soul new sources of enjoyment, infinitely varied, and continually increasing, in an eternal progression of happiness. By attempting entirely to spiritualize our celestial existence, we reduce ourselves to the impossibility of forming the least idea of it ; and while we acknowledge a resurrection of the body, we in fact deny it. To this cause, amongst others, is owing the coldness and indifference with which even the best people too often regard the joys of heaven ; and the assertion so often repeated, that we can form no idea at all of our future state. Yet we cannot reasonably complain of the unsatisfactoriness of that information, which few of us endeavour to obtain ; and it will not, I think, be difficult to prove, that in these researches, the Holy Scripture confirms the deduction of reason.

The expressions of St. Paul, our body “ raised in glory,”† which implies an inconceivable improve-

* 1 Cor. xv. 51.

† 1 Cor. xv. 43.

ment of our organs ; “ then we shall see face to face ;” * “ now we walk by faith, not by sight ;” † “ now we know in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away :” ‡—the comparison which the same apostle makes between our present state, and that in which we shall be in heaven, “ when I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ; but when I became a man, I put away childish things :” §—what St. John says, in speaking of God, that “ we shall see him as he is.” ¶—All these passages establish as so many infallible truths, the flattering ideas which mere reason ventures to present to us only as conjectures.

We shall see God face to face. Of what nature will be that view or that knowledge? Here it would be rash and absurd to conjecture ; because, in order to be in a state to do it, we must be invested with the faculties requisite to conceive that kind of knowledge : that is, we must be now, what we shall be after a glorious resurrection. When St. Paul was caught up to Heaven in a miraculous extacy, he heard things which he declares to be “ unspeakable.” ¶ Thus with regard to the manner of the beatific vision, we are in a profound ignorance here below ; but we may venture to assert, that we shall know God, and every other object, with a strength, a facility, a clearness of conception, infinitely superior to all

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. † 2 Cor. v. 7. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10.
§ 1 Cor. xiii. 11. ¶ 1 John iii. 2. ¶ 2 Cor. xii. 4.

which the finest capacity can hope for on earth, from the longest study. The soul, invested with a spiritual body, and thus provided with organs incomparably more perfect than those with which it is now connected, will have great advantages for acquiring knowledge, and making a rapid progress in it. The attributes of God, the conduct of his providence, his vast designs, and, as proceeding from them, the wonders of creation, of which we now discern only a small part; all these objects of infinite grandeur, beauty, variety, and importance, in the study of which we are every moment sensible of the weakness of our understandings, will be placed within the reach of our observation.

By the lustre of the heavenly ray with which God will enlighten us, a thousand admirable novelties will burst upon our sight; in him, and by him, we shall see all around us what at present eye cannot see, hear what at present ear cannot hear, and our hearts shall conceive what at present they cannot conceive.

Those who sail upon the ocean, some leagues from land, see only the coasts. Those who have the clearest eyes, with the best instruments, discern in this confused landscape only some objects, which are lost to others, and which strongly excite curiosity. Night comes on and veils the prospect from their sight. During their sleep the vessel approaches the port, and at sun-rise casts anchor. They land; a thousand beautiful and magnificent objects present

themselves on every side, infinitely excelling all which the distant view had induced them to imagine.

Thus we shall enjoy in heaven, to a degree beyond all conception, the pleasures of novelty and surprise, of finding our curiosity satisfied, or at least ourselves provided with means to enable us to satisfy it: for if we were to suppose that God would display to us at once, all which we hope to know through eternity, this would be, according to my ideas, to suppose that he would rob our knowledge of one of its greatest charms.

In proportion as the truths we are to learn shall become more difficult to comprehend, we shall doubtless acquire talents adapted to them; and thus we shall go on from strength to strength, with regard to the pleasure of acquiring and possessing knowledge, as in every respect we shall rise from glory to glory.

The studies requisite to advance in this manner will not be oppressive labours. The assistance which may be necessary to us, an infinite number of beings more intelligent than ourselves, and full of celestial goodness, will be eager to offer. If they are now “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation,”* will they not then rejoice to associate with us, when, purified from the corruptions of mortality, we shall be “as the angels which are in heaven?”† Our own efforts, provided they do not fatigue us, contribute much to

* Heb. i. 14.

† Mark xii. 25.

our satisfaction. Our exertions being thus the source of our pleasure, nothing will discourage us; for can we fail to have a stedfast hope of success? Upon what could a fear of disappointment be founded? What ever then may be the length of the attentions requisite to attain to a certain point, the hope, or rather assurance of success, will support, animate, and fill us with joy.

Our progress, always equal to our faculties, and not retarded by involuntary interruptions, will be great and rapid. In a world where we shall be freed from all the cares which are here requisite for our subsistence, our cloathing, our lodging; where we shall sleep no more; where "there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain;"* where all far from molesting us, or deranging our plans of study, will favour them; it is evident that we must have undisturbed leisure to execute them.

At the same time, with such great advantages for enjoying all the pleasure of acquiring and possessing knowledge, and, notwithstanding the vast treasure of science which we shall have collected through myriads of ages,—we shall never lose for a moment that soothing idea, so necessary to the happiness of every being who values the pleasure of learning; that the source of this pleasure will never fail. In God, and the immensity of his works, there is an inexhaustible fund of materials to satisfy the most unbounded curiosity; but though assured that we

* Rev. xxi. 4.

shall never arrive at a period when there will be no more to learn, yet we shall still preserve a steadfast hope, that we shall perfectly understand all the objects which offer themselves for our investigation.

It may be objected, in answer to these observations on the extent of our capacities in a future state, and the means which will be afforded us for acquiring knowledge, that there will probably be some things, the entire comprehension of which will be reserved for God alone; as it is reasonable to suppose that the creature, however perfect, can never acquire complete ideas of every thing relative to the Deity; and, in that case, that we may feel our curiosity strongly excited, without being possessed of the means to satisfy it. But I believe, that when we shall have attained to such an exalted understanding, we shall have all the discernment requisite to distinguish between what is to be known to the creature, and what to the Supreme Being alone; and, always able to regulate appetites which might corrupt us, we shall, without difficulty, prescribe to our curiosity the same limits, which will necessarily, from the nature of things, be prescribed to our knowledge. The most noble ambition would be extravagant, if it engaged a created being to desire to usurp the place of the greatest, the first of beings: this therefore will not happen: the most ardent imagination will not aspire so high. The most vehement curiosity will be repressed, the moment we shall perceive, that to attempt to pene-

trate further, would be to encroach upon the privileges of the Most High; to wish to be what He is, what He alone can be. Always humble and grateful, always joyfully submitting our own will to that of the great God, whom we shall love with all our soul, we shall no sooner arrive at those unfathomable depths, than retreating with respect, and acknowledging our dependance on him, we shall, without regret, turn all our attention and inquiries towards that multitude of objects, upon which we may innocently and successfully indulge our curiosity.

If then we are in the smallest degree susceptible of those pleasures which are the most worthy of a thinking being, the idea of seeing God as he is, must excite very strong desires; and how natural is it to seek incessantly the means to fulfil those desires, and to employ those means without delay!

They are all comprehended in this word, *holiness*. Those alone will be admitted into the adorable presence of God, who labour sincerely and assiduously in the work of their sanctification. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord:” * “depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” †

To meditate on God as soon as we are capable of reasoning, to apply afterwards to that meditation more and more, is a sure path to holiness, and a most powerful incentive to exert every possible effort to practise it with diligence. Even an indis-

* Heb. xii. 14.

† Matth. vii. 23.

tinct and limited knowledge of the wisdom and goodness of the Almighty, such a knowledge as we may acquire here below, must fill our hearts with comfort and joy. God, in the glories of the gospel dispensation, is the God of mercy, the God of peace. What measures of benignity ! What effusions of grace ! He is amiable; adorable, beyond all expression, all conception : our language has no terms, our hearts have no sentiments, adequate to this sublime subject.

We may reasonably suppose, that all the endeavours which we employ upon earth to know God, shall not be lost to us in heaven ; and that those who in this world shall acquire the best knowledge of Him, will have, at their entrance into the habitations of glory, the qualities most requisite for seeing Him as he is.

Every man, who has not been bewildered by false information ; who has steadfastly followed, through the interposing mists of error, those rays of light which God has diffused through the universe ; and above all, he, who favoured with that shining light displayed in the gospel, shall constantly have employed it as a guide to direct him into the paths of truth. in a word, every man who, uninfluenced by prejudice, shall not have adopted any of those systems which give us false notions of our great God, notions injurious to the divine majesty, will have nothing to correct in the copy, which, faint as it is, now so much delights him. He sees God only

as through *a glass* ; he sees him only at a distance ; yet at least his glass is true ; if it represents the image faintly and *darkly*, it does not represent it falsely ; but when he shall enter into the regions of bliss, before the throne of God, he shall see Him in the brightness of his glory. Happy here below, when we faintly discern him such as he is : how supremely blest shall we be, when we shall “ behold him face to face ; when we shall know, even as also we are known !”*

† 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

ON THE
HAPPINESS
OF THE
LIFE TO COME.

PART II.

I HAVE as yet only considered what may satisfy our boundless curiosity in the knowledge which we shall have of God in the future state, but there are many other delightful sentiments with which this knowledge may inspire us.

When we contemplate objects which deserve our admiration, and which are besides connected with our self-love, or with our generous and social affections, then to the pleasure of admiring, are united various other pleasures which animate and extend it in proportion to the number and greatness of these objects. I will endeavour to illustrate this by a familiar example.

Let me suppose myself conducted into a palace, from thence into a garden, from thence into a beautiful country, where art and nature have united to form all which we can imagine pleasant, commodi-

ous, and lovely. I have leisure to admire the most striking beauties: I do so, with the indifference of a stranger, who is immediately to quit these charming scenes, where neither himself nor his friends have the least possession; but at the instant of my departure, my conductor stops to tell me, that all which I have just seen belongs to me and to my friends. I return: I remark with an extreme surprise, that even in the most trifling things, the most scrupulous attention has been paid to our taste; that even the smallest flower is disposed according to our fancy: then my admiration is raised to the highest degree: the little flower, artfully placed in that particular spot to gratify me, affords me a much more lively pleasure than I had felt before in the contemplation of all the enchanting beauties of this terrestrial paradise. But the emotions of my heart towards him to whose goodness I owe this magnificent present, are of a different nature, and diffuse over my soul the sweetest sentiments of love and gratitude.

This will be our case in heaven. At first astonished at the objects which will offer themselves to our observation on every side, and afterwards reflecting on the goodness of the Creator who has given them to us, and disposed our minds to enjoy them, we shall admire their several relations to our faculties; and a minute examination of these will increase our admiration to infinity, and continually awaken in our hearts a new emotion of gratitude and love.

To the prospect of this treasure of felicity which

will be displayed before our enchanted eyes, will be added the recollection of all which God has done to secure the possession of it to us.

"Is memory's magic only felt below ?

"Say, thro' what brighter realms she bids it flow ;

"To what pure spirits in a nobler sphere,

"She yields delight, but faintly imag'd here."

We shall retrace, to a remote period, that amazing variety of combinations, circumstances, and events, which the providence of God has brought to pass to work out our salvation. Our particular reflexions upon ourselves will soon extend to the whole human race. In unfolding the work of our redemption, which will then be completed, we shall by degrees discover the depths of that wisdom, and that love, which have shone forth in Jesus Christ, and which at present the angels themselves cannot totally penetrate. What here appears most obscure in the dispensations of Providence, what sometimes confounds, alarms, and discourages us, will then appear to have been evidently necessary to the divine system, and the most mysterious parts to have been the most skilfully contrived and disposed.

In the same manner, with regard to the evils of this life, of which we now sometimes complain so bitterly, which we support with such impatience, and which we every moment fear should betray us into injurious murmurs against our heavenly Father, we shall perceive that to them we are in some degree indebted for our state of glory. With what

joy shall we then reflect on these favourable evils, these happy afflictions! What transports of love and gratitude to God will be excited by this retrospect of the past! We shall continually recur to this affecting idea, and dwell upon it with rapture. Formerly he had appeared to us a God who had pleasure in concealing himself, a father whose ambiguous dealings might render his affection uncertain; but then we shall perceive, that always inclined “to lift up the light of his countenance upon us,”* he had deferred it only ’till the proper time should arrive; that he had constantly been a watchful and impartial father, unchangeable in his vast and generous designs, which had ever been conducive to our happiness; but whom the steadfastness of his affection, and his profound knowledge of what would best contribute to our felicity, had engaged to impose upon us a discipline accommodated to our dispositions and our state upon earth, and which consequently had been sometimes severe. Regarding then, in the true point of view, all his conduct towards us, we shall discover an admirable union of the tenderest care, the most consummate prudence, and the most inimitable skill, to guide and impel us insensibly towards a state of everlasting happiness. The pleasure of surprise, of a comparison between our present and our past situation, all the relief which our joy can receive from the most soothing reflexions, we shall enjoy to the utmost.

* Psa. iv. 6.

If our happiness would be complete in itself, without the aid of such a comparison, what vivacity of sentiment will it add to it! The contemplation of the dispensations of God, in every part of this retrospect, will raise in our souls sentiments of gratitude and love, of which our happiest experiences in piety upon earth can give us but a faint idea.

When an event befalls us in this world which surpasses our hopes, if we connect with that event a firm persuasion that it is in a peculiar manner the effect of the approbation and favour with which God honours us, we shall have infinitely greater joy in that persuasion, than in the benefit itself which his providence has just bestowed upon us. The sentiments of affection and gratitude, which arise in our minds towards a benefactor worthy of all our veneration, all our attachment, are far superior in value to the gift which we receive from him. This gift is a pledge of his affection, and that consideration awakens all our own: that engaging idea is what principally renders it precious to us. This is true above all with regard to God; for besides the present advantage which we enjoy, besides the delightful sentiments of gratitude and love which it inspires, we may infer from it what are the designs of the Most High, and what will be his future dealing with us. His favour once obtained, we do not lose it but by our own fault; there is no caprice, no inconstancy, to be feared from God. What may we not then expect and hope! What sweet emoti-

ons arise at once in our souls ! And in heaven how clear, how convincing will this argument be !

Here below, besides that we are prevented from beholding, by the “ clouds and darkness which are round about,”* our good God, the full perfection of that “ righteousness and judgment which are the habitation of his throne;”† and from tasting that joy unspeakable and full of glory, with which a clear perception of him would fill every heart; besides this obscurity, there is often another obstacle, incomparably more difficult to surmount, and which we ourselves create ; this is sin. We are the same with regard to God, as we usually are with regard to our friends ; as soon as we have acted ill towards them, or in any manner rendered ourselves less worthy of their affection, we immediately feel our own diminish. Frequently, in consequence of the injury which an unjust offender has committed, he hates the offended person more than he is hated by him.

Of all mental evils, the greatest and the most insupportable is remorse of conscience. To those who have been guilty of enormous crimes, it is a sensation of inexpressible anguish ; but every species of guilt, every degree of sin, creates in the mind uneasiness and confusion, in proportion to the sentence which we pass upon our actions ; and it is impossible to elude the judgment of our own consci-

* Psa. xcvi. 2.

† 1 Pet. i. 8.

ence, or to render ourselves indifferent to its awful voice.

Shame, as well as remorse, is always revived by the sight of the person we have injured ; it strikes through the heart, and we fly, we abhor, whatever awakens it. The idea of a witness of our unworthiness, especially when that witness is the person with regard to whom we are guilty, is a tormenting idea. If to shame be added a well-grounded fear of suffering the punishment deserved, we have then a complication of emotions which distract us. Such is our deplorable situation with regard to God, when we have trampled on his sacred laws, and despised his salutary counsels. The sentiments of soothing confidence, of sincere and ardent love, which we once felt towards him, are weakened by the shock of various opposite sentiments. This great God, who was the source of our tranquility, of our consolation and joy, becomes a source of shame and fear ; and if we are not diligent to suppress this frightful tumult in our souls, by sincere repentance and speedy amendment, we expose ourselves to the most formidable of all dangers, that of changing into aversion those sentiments of filial duty and affection which we once felt towards that adorable and Almighty Being. If we were always wise and virtuous, we should taste here below, in a high degree, the pleasure of loving God ; but even those who have made the greatest progress in the work of sanctification, have always sufficient cause to re-

proach themselves. This is what principally cools that celestial ardor, and mingles much bitterness with all its pleasures.

In heaven this great obstacle will be removed. If at first we should feel some degree of shame, on the recollection of the numerous weaknesses, omissions, and errors, which had interrupted the work of our sanctification, and should be confused at obtaining rewards so greatly surpassing all which we could reasonably expect from our cares and exertions; cares so continually interrupted, exertions frequently so languid; these painful reflexions will immediately be alleviated by the propitious aspect of our heavenly father, and afterwards entirely absorbed in the profusion of his favours. Having once and for ever “cast away our sins,”* and ceased to “remember our iniquities;”† having accepted our good intentions and our feeble endeavours, he will obviate at the moment of our entrance into glory, by every testimony of paternal affection, all which might give us uneasiness. Like the indulgent and tender father, in the affecting parable of the prodigal son; who, instead of uttering the least reproach to his returning penitent, was anxious to dry up his tears, hastened to embrace him, and bestowed upon him innumerable caresses and benefits; he will not leave us time to recal to our minds those painful sentiments which his ineffable goodness will exclude for ever and ever.

* Micah vii. 19.

† Heb. viii. 12.

We are surrounded here below by those dangerous enemies of our soul, temptations. However important may be the advantages which we have obtained, and however firm may be our confidence in future victories, through the grace of God, yet we must still sustain the combat; we are exposed to surprise, and frequently, alas! we yield to it. We must live in a state of continual watchfulness, lest in an unguarded moment we should be led astray from the path of duty; "for our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."* How delightful then will be that tranquility and peace, which we shall enjoy, when such shall be our happy situation, such our spiritual strength, that, instead of temptations to guard against, we shall find in every object around us, something to afford an agreeable exercise to our virtue.

From all which has befallen us in this world and above all, from the happiness we shall experience at our entrance into the next, we may deduce prophetic consequences, which will be a transporting anticipation of those degrees of glory and felicity, which we shall not at first possess. I am in the harbour of salvation, safe from a thousand dangers from which I have just escaped; they exist no longer, except in my remembrance. These dangers, formerly so terrible, now only form a strong contrast, which makes me feel more sensibly my present secu-

* 1 Pet. v. 8.

rity. Tranquil and happy in the midst of my friends, I look forward only to pleasures, pure, infinitely varied, and eternal.

We can conceive but very imperfectly the delights of such a situation ; yet there are circumstances in this world, which may perhaps convey to the mind a faint idea of it. For example, you escape miraculously from a shipwreck ; you land amidst the embraces of beloved friends, from whom you had been separated for many years, and whom you had scarcely hoped to meet again ; you hear the sea still roaring behind you, but in vain ; you find yourself in a peaceful and charming asylum, amidst the sweetest transports of the tenderest affection. "Such a deliverance." says the elegant and amiable Dr. BEATTIE, "will every good man meet with at last, when he is taken away from the evils of life, and awakes in the regions of everlasting peace ; looking back on the world and its troubles with a surprise and satisfaction, similar in kind, though far higher in degree, to that which we now feel, when we awake from a terrifying dream, and open our eyes upon the sweet serenity of a summer morning."

All will be joy and exultation. The bitter streams which mingle with the sweets of this life, will then be totally dried up. No more remorse, no more shame or anxiety, shall there interrupt our felicity : (allow me to use some repetition and recapitulation, for we return with pleasure to such objects, and love to dwell upon them :) from reviewing in the

records of the past the depths of the wisdom and mercy of God, we shall derive a thousand inexpressible pleasures. In reflecting on our passage through mortality, that dangerous passage, which, in spite of so many errors and wanderings, shall at length through the indulgence and assistance of our heavenly Father, have conducted us to that happy abode; we shall find, not only in the best actions and most favourable events of our lives, but in our misfortunes, our dangers, and even in our failings, subjects for admiration and joy. On the other side, the immensity of that futurity to which we shall look forward, will be a boundless perspective, presenting a progressive succession, a constant and inexhaustible store of knowledge and pleasure, of amiable sentiments, and generous designs; which unclipped, and uninterrupted, continually extend the amazing prospect, and augment the magnificent scene; ascending through a state of gradual, but constant improvement, to the centre of all glory and felicity; the throne of the Most High.

These prospects, so flattering to ourselves, will also include all the intelligent beings which surround us. Those beams of light and life, which proceed from the throne of the Lord, will have dispersed every cloud, and dispelled every shadow of death. They will diffuse around a perfect serenity, an ineffable and glorious joy.

It is not sufficient to be happy ourselves, or rather we cannot be happy alone: it is also necessary

that all those should be made happy, who are capable of becoming so. What pleasure must a generous soul derive from contemplating the Supreme Being, continually establishing, without partiality, all the happiness which is suitable to every one, or of which every one is susceptible. But of this noble pleasure we are entirely destitute here below. None of our fellow-creatures are perfectly happy, and a great number of them are in a state of suffering. This alone would be sufficient to render the happiness of the present life imperfect, even if it were a situation in other respects the most desirable. If, with the assurance of our own safety, we cannot connect that of the safety of the friends whom we love, our tranquility must be very imperfect. But in heaven, our friends, (if they have not been totally unworthy of that name) our dearest friends, will be with us, in perfect security, in the presence of our great God. The power of pain and death over them, as well as over ourselves, will have ceased; and consequently all that dejection, and those variations of temper, which corporeal disorders sometimes occasions upon earth, will cease also; and amongst beings so wise, so good, so refined, both in body and soul, we shall enjoy an intercourse always undisturbed and always free.

Happy in ourselves and in our friends, we shall also rejoice in the felicity of all around us. To feel sincerely and forcibly the happiness of others, is in some measure to increase our own, in proportion

to the number of the blessed. This will be more particularly considered when I speak of our sentiments in regard to our fellow-creatures; but it is principally to God, that all the various sentiments which I have mentioned must be referred. He will be the great object of our love, the strength of our confidence, and the source of all our happiness.

Every pleasure which we enjoy will continually recal our attention to Him, by constantly setting before us his tender cares: it will be in Him that we shall see the glorious plan of universal felicity, which shall increase through all eternity: in a word, according to the admirable expression of St. Paul, he will be "all in all."* He will not only be the most essential object of all our attachment, the inexhaustible treasure, as well as the original cause, of our greatest pleasures; we shall not only trace his hand continually, in every new effect of his wisdom and beneficence, but He himself will penetrate even to the inmost recesses of our hearts. He has formed them, he sees them, and knows their most secret sentiments. It is He who has put in motion all the springs of our felicity, and it will be in his presence that we shall find fullness of joy. Nothing is too vast for his power, nothing too difficult for his wisdom, nothing too beneficent for his goodness. What a variety of delightful sentiments he will create in us, in manifesting himself to us as he is; and in giving room to our liberty, our understandings,

* 1 Cor. xv. 28.

and our affections, to exert themselves according to our wishes, and at the same time in the pursuit of our greatest good !

He shall be all in all ! This great, this good God will fill our souls with that joy which his adorable presence will diffuse throughout the universe. All which is pleasing, all which is transporting, in admiration, in gratitude, in love, in confidence, in hope ; in the anticipated accomplishment of the generous wishes formed by a noble heart, glowing with fraternal affection ; in the prospect of an infinite variety of blessings, at which we shall sooner or later arrive, all adapted to contribute in some measure to our happiness ; and finally in the prospect of an eternal augmentation of excellence and felicity ;—all this we shall possess and enjoy without alloy, and with a warmth and energy of sentiment, which we neither feel, nor *can* feel, here below ; for the Lord himself, from whom proceedeth “every good and every perfect gift,”* will be “the portion of our inheritance”† to all eternity.

* James i. 17.

† Psa. xvi. 5.

ON THE
HAPPINESS
OF THE
LIFE TO COME.

PART III.

I SHALL now make a few observations on those sentiments which will arise from our connexion with our fellow-creatures, and with the other inhabitants of the mansions of immortality.

We are so formed for society, that we cannot imagine happiness without it. The idea of an abode where it would be impossible for us to meet with any of our fellow-creatures, a desert island for instance, upon which we might be cast by a shipwreck, has something in it melancholy and dreadful. In vain might that island be represented as the garden of Eden; this would have no influence upon us. But let us suppose that a second shipwreck should cast on the same coast two or three persons, possessed of talents and merit to deserve our esteem; this idea immediately diffuses over our heart consolation and joy. This pleasure does not arise from

reflecting on the assistance which we may derive from each other, in procuring the necessaries of life. Though nature herself should have formed for us a commodious and agreeable habitation, though our food should spring up spontaneously, though the useful animals should come to us of their own accord, or suffer themselves to be taken and tamed without difficulty ; all this could not compensate for the absence of every being upon whom we could fix that social affection by which our hearts are animated. All which might give us pleasure, if we were not alone, would in solitude become insipid and wearisome.

“ In Solitude

“ What happiness, who can enjoy alone,

“ Or all enjoying, what contentment find ?”*

It is not therefore because we could not subsist, or not without painful and continual exertions, that we love our fellow-creatures ; but because we are formed to love them ; because our sentiments towards them, and theirs towards us, are the principal sources, the great springs of our felicity. It is true that the caprices and vices of those with whom we are connected, frequently suspend, impede, and restrain, our natural affections ; and sometimes change into aversion our strongest propensity towards friendship. Then these affections resemble affrighted birds ; after a long and wavering flight, if they rest any where at last, it is without confi-

* Milton.

dence, and every moment prepared to fly off again. That suspicious disposition is frequently very excessive; and it is generally owing in a great measure to ourselves.

In judging of the actions of others, and especially of such actions as are evidently doubtful, we are too apt to suffer ourselves to be biassed by prejudice. Thus an understanding, on other occasions just and penetrating, may be deceived; and the error is more fatal as it is necessarily unjust and cruel. A man endued with excellent moral faculties, which he has assiduously cultivated, perceives instantaneously in every action what motives would on such an occasion infallibly have influenced himself. He discovers some just causes for suspicion, but his impartial mind is in a state to decide, according to the strictest rules of equity, whether the fact may be considered in the most advantageous light, or whether there is a strong foundation for doubt; and he concludes with humility, that at the worst it may be one of those actions in which some evil is blended with the good. But those observers, who yield imperceptibly to a secret jealousy, or who prefer the reputation of penetration to that of charity, have not recourse to laudable motives, if they can without them explain the mystery with an air of plausibility, or with the hope of pleasing the multitude: they confidently assert that such motives had no part in the action; and applauding themselves for such an ingenious discovery, they raise it as a trophy to

their pride; for pride generally gives rise to that false policy, which makes us judge so rigorously of the actions of others; and if such is the weakness of human nature, that we must in one way or other deviate from the point of perfection, it is infinitely more for our own comfort, and for that of all around us, that we should err on the side of affection and benevolence. It is better to be exposed to the danger of deception, than to torment ourselves with subjects of suspicion, perhaps entirely imaginary.

Again: frequently possessed by some passion which prevents us from cultivating diligently these sweet affections, we suffer them to be enfeebled, 'till we render ourselves almost insensible to them; our self-love becomes confined; it can no longer cherish even those sentiments which were the most calculated to gratify it. By thus neglecting, and leaving unexercised, our social and generous dispositions, we accustom ourselves by degrees to consider our fellow-creatures as so many instruments from which we may derive some advantage in the affairs of life; but we lose the idea of the pure pleasure of loving. Still more; we suffer to perish in our souls the sublime pleasure of desiring the happiness of others, without any interested view to our own: then we regard with indifference those who cannot render us any service, or contribute in any manner to our amusement. Confined within a narrow sphere, we do not extend our social affections beyond a small number of friends: perhaps there may

be some who, strictly speaking, cannot be said to love any one of their fellow-creatures.

But even those who, partly through the faults of others, and partly through their own, are thus almost contracted within themselves, and suffer their generous and social affections to languish in total inaction; even they would reanimate them with a powerful energy, if all mankind should become really estimable and amiable, and should clearly appear so to them. You are informed that all who surround you are changed; that they are good and generous; that they love you sincerely and tenderly; and that even those strangers whom you see at a distance, are impatient to give you proofs of the affection which they feel towards you. These obdurate hearts would be no longer inflexible; they would, with the most pleasing surprise, feel themselves affected with the same sentiments which they should find in all around them.

This will be our case in heaven. We shall be secure of meeting, in each of the blessed, with every disposition, every affection, every sentiment, which we would wish them to feel towards us.

We all have a natural desire to be esteemed and beloved. The fact is incontestable. This is an admirable motive to induce us to exert all our faculties in the most advantageous manner; to unite ourselves to each other by the tenderest friendship; to perform the most glorious actions. The wisdom and goodness of God are displayed in this disposition

of our hearts. Here below, our own errors and frailties, and a great number of external objects; various accidents, the ignorance of other men, and their false judgments, often prevent us from gratifying that noble desire. But the worst of men cannot entirely divest themselves of regard for the approbation of their fellow-creatures. That affection and esteem which by means of certain qualities and actions we may have lost with some, we endeavour to regain with others by different qualities and an altered conduct; but the success is always uncertain.

It will not be thus in heaven. All its inhabitants, being really estimable and amiable, will be constantly esteemed and beloved. We shall no longer be deceived, with regard either to the proper objects of esteem and friendship, or the proper means of inspiring them with the same sentiments towards ourselves.

Endued with the most excellent faculties, far more susceptible than we now are of moral pleasures; zealous imitators of the great God, whom we shall then see continually "face to face;" we shall love all who approach him: those innumerable beings who surround his throne, we shall love with a warmth, a delicacy, and a constancy, which we can but imperfectly conceive in this world. God loves us better, infinitely better, than the most tender father loves his only son. We shall learn of him our fraternal love: regarding all his creatures as his children, we shall feel for them that peculiar affec-

tion with which we are naturally inspired for every object, considered by those who are dear to us as worthy of theirs. We shall love all our fellow-creatures, every intelligent being, for God, and in God. Every circumstance also will concur to promote our union and mutual affection.

Here it is quite otherwise; there are frequently jarring interests, misunderstandings, obscurities, and difficulties, in our affairs and our claims, discussions on property, oppressive customs, tyrannical prejudices on the point of honour, and false notions respecting the designs and sentiments of others: from hence arise fears and suspicions; and then, how much time is requisite, how many obstacles must be surmounted, in order to be secure of the regard of our fellow-creatures. Every one knows the danger we incur of making an improper choice, and of misplacing our confidence; and how difficult it is to prevent others from distrusting us. There are also jealousies and wars between entire nations; the disadvantageous opinions, the enmities, which a trifle suddenly produces, are fomented and increased through succeeding ages; in a word, innumerable events, both public and private, destroy mutual affection, or render it feeble, partial, and limited.

However well disposed we may be, it is not possible for this affection to prevail in our hearts with all the force, and to all the extent, of which it is capable. Either from a deficiency of deserving ob-

jects, or from various accidental causes, it seldom happens, in the course of a long life, that we acquire more than two or three friends towards whom we can indulge it without constraint or diminution; some defect, some trifling circumstance, restrains or interrupts it; and even in the happiest friendships, the impossibility of continually enjoying the society of all the objects of our affection, the necessity of separating from some in order to associate with others, render our tenderest connexions in this world sources of pain as well as of pleasure.

In the mutual services which we render to each other here below, there are generally several imperfections: perhaps we defer them too long; we do not extend them to the utmost; in conferring a favour we may fail to observe a proper delicacy, and give pain to the person obliged by our manner of bestowing a benefit; when we have been great benefactors, we are apt almost insensibly to assume an authority, which those who are the objects of our kindness feel, without venturing to complain of it. On the other side, those who have received obligations, though really equitable, and sincerely disposed to gratitude, are often deceived with regard to the true value of the favours bestowed: various suspicions respecting the motive of the benefit, some trifling error in the manner of conferring it, some inattention to that *subtile essence** which constitutes

* See Miss H. MORE's charming poem on Sensibility.

the *gracious* in word or action; or, finally, that ascendancy which the benefactor gains, and of which he sometimes makes an improper use: all these disturb and weaken gratitude, discourage and abate affection.

How uncommon is perfect mutual affection here below! Besides various subjects for reciprocal distrust, what a trifle disquiets us! And those almost imperceptible defects, which occasion slight mortifications, few people are sufficiently unprejudiced to discover clearly in themselves, or to bear with meekness and thankfulness to be told of them by others; and how few are there who can eradicate them entirely!

In conversation, and in our social recreations, many little difficulties arise, which greatly diminish the pleasure they might afford. Such are, the constraint often imposed upon us; our uncertainty of what attentions, or what subjects of discourse, would be the most acceptable; the reserve, the indifference, the ignorance of some; the excessive vivacity and arrogance of others; amusements ill chosen, in which we neglect and offend some person, because a separate interest interposes; a failure in respect; marked preferences, which render some indifferent, and raise jealousy and indignation in the hearts of others; frequently an unpolite eagerness, which leads several persons to speak at the same time, to interrupt each other, or to suffer no one to be heard but themselves. By these means

the most interesting conversations degenerate into broken sentences, without order, and without consistency; or change into tedious soliloquies, which reduce a man of taste to solitary meditation in the midst of a large company; as few people have attained to that perfect politeness which can give a long and uninterrupted attention to that which is disagreeable or uninteresting, notwithstanding it is so necessary to the real comfort of life: all this creates disgust, restlessness, impatience, and a desire to be elsewhere.

“ These, and a thousand griefs minute as these,
“ Corrode our comfort, and destroy our ease.”*

It would be an endless task to enumerate the various unpleasant circumstances which intrude themselves into society, even amongst those who have always the inclination to render it agreeable, and talents to enable them to do so.

That all these inconveniencies will be excluded from heaven, we shall be convinced, when we consider the difference of our faculties, sentiments, and situation there. An unbounded confidence, united hearts, souls open to each other, celestial benevolence; a sovereign contempt for those vain distinctions which flatter our confined imaginations here below; a pure and ardent affection, and in consequence of that, an unwearied endeavour to promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures, by

* Poem on Sensibility.

gratifying to the utmost of our power their inclinations and tastes; inclinations well-regulated and amiable, tastes corrected and refined, and which we shall discover distinctly at the first interview: it appears evident to me, that with all these favourable circumstances, a real and reasonable politeness, that politeness which, proceeding from the heart where charity reigns, excludes all troublesome formalities, and exerts the most obliging attentions, will universally prevail amongst such beings as the inhabitants of heaven must be supposed to be.

Not only an opposition of interests can have no place there, but on the contrary, all our interests must necessarily be united. If the objects which might be profitable to us, were sufficiently abundant to be equally useful to us all; or if they were of such a nature, that each of us might obtain the possession of them, without destroying or diminishing that of others; if every one, satisfied with his own present pleasures, patiently waiting 'till his lawful exertions should procure greater for him, regarded those of others with no view but to congratulate them sincerely upon their enjoyment of them: in short, if the happiness of each individual, far from being prejudicial to others, augmented the felicity of all; and if every affection, concentered in the Supreme Being, tended in conformity with his to promote that universal felicity, it is evident that each particular interest, instead of opposing the general advantage, would be closely connected

with it; and that common interest would unite every heart by indissoluble bands.

This will be our situation in heaven; there our mutual affection, strengthened by our progress in knowledge and virtue, animated by the presence and by the love of God, encouraged by all around us, free from all impediments, and secure from all indifference,—will be more ardent and tender towards each individual of the blessed, than that which we now feel for the most beloved friend. Amongst so many millions of associates in felicity, we shall not exclude one from this universal regard; yet the multiplicity of the objects of our friendship will not diminish its force. We may be convinced of this, as we have many examples here below which in some measure prove it to us. A father and mother who have a numerous family, or a person who passes his life amidst a circle of chosen friends, may afford us these examples. The parents love their children, the friend his friends, without any individual depriving the rest of the sentiments due to them; they love them all sincerely and tenderly; they cannot lose one of them without feeling a severe pang. I do not say that they have an equal affection for them all; that is not necessary; and I am far from supposing that particular friendships will be excluded from heaven. There, probably, as well as upon earth, will be those singular affinities, and favourable concurrences, which, united with true merit, form those friendships, so inti-

mate, so precious, and so uncommon, the mere idea of which is ever soothing to the soul. Will those who by the most diligent exertions have established such an union upon earth, lose the fruit of all their cares in the mansions of glory and happiness? Surely not.

"There thy bright train, immortal friendship, soar,

"No more to part, to mingle tears no more!

"And, as the softening hand of time endears

"The joys and sorrows of our infant years;

"So there the soul, releas'd from human strife,

"Smiles at the little cares and ills of life;

"Its lights and shades, its sunshine and its show'rs,

"As at a dream that charm'd her vacant hours."

The imagination ever active, ever inquisitive, loves to anticipate futurity, and to form airy scenes of happiness, which, when they relate to this world alone, frequently fade and vanish away. But when we extend our views to the realms of everlasting felicity, we may safely indulge ourselves in contemplating the enchanting prospects, which, founded on faith, and illuminated by hope, will become brighter on a nearer approach, increasing *more and more unto the perfect day*. We may anticipate the happiness we shall there derive from the renewal of our earthly friendships; and such reflexions will console the afflicted heart, when every other comfort fails.

When a fond parent weeps over a departed child, what consolation can the world afford? Let us sup-

pose that child to be *the only son of his mother, and she a widow*; in vain her friends attempt to soothe her sorrows; they cannot awaken in her soul those transporting sensations which the fond caresses of her child continually excited; sensations which only parents feel. But when she looks beyond the grave, when she contemplates her once suffering infant transformed into an angel of light, she submits with pious resignation to the will of her heavenly Father; while she meditates with rapture on that period, when her soul, disengaged from the fetters of mortality, shall ascend to the throne of God, and be welcomed to those blissful regions by a glorious angel, once the innocent cause of her tears, but thenceforth the sweet companion and joyful promoter of her eternal felicity!

How often is a son deprived of an affectionate and virtuous father, at that early period of life, when, assailed by temptations, and deceived by false appearances, a prudent guardian is most requisite to guide his steps in safety through surrounding dangers. What must be the transport of such a father, when he shall meet his son entering into the regions of celestial peace, to receive the reward of a virtuous and holy life; and shall hear him acknowledge the advantages he had received from those principles of piety, and those examples of virtue, by which his paternal care had established his heart in the right way, during the years of childhood; which had influenced his conduct to the last

moment of his mortal existence, had pointed out to him the *path of life*, and taught him to pass with religious courage through *the valley of the shadow of death*!

What must be the feelings of the pious pastor, when he shall meet those happy spirits over whom he had watched in this life with parental care and tenderness; to whom he had displayed, in their most attractive colours, the sacred doctrines of the gospel: the timid, whom he had inspired with confidence; the discontented, whom he had armed with patience; the despairing, whom he had soothed with hope; the ignorant, whom he had blest with instruction; the careless, whom he had awakened to watchfulness; the proud, whom he had converted to humility. How will he rejoice to behold their felicity, and to hear them acknowledge their gratitude to him, while with religious joy he shall behold in himself the accomplishment of that promise of scripture, "they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."*

Those whose precepts and example have extended beyond the short duration of their own life, and the narrow sphere in which they moved upon earth; whose writings have defended the truths of religion against the attacks of false philosophy, and asserted the cause of pure morality in defiance of licentious sophistry; will offer continual praises to *the Lord who giveth wisdom*, who enabled them to employ

* Dan. xii. 3.

their talents to his glory ; and whilst in heaven they rejoice in the effects of their labours, with those glorified spirits who had derived instruction from them upon earth, they will find confirmed this sacred truth, “ that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the praise of it endureth for ever.”*

Perhaps some difference of opinion, some unfortunate misunderstanding, had separated on earth those who once were tenderly attached to each other ; circumstances, which could not be explained, had weakened esteem, and interrupted friendship ; but when all the mists of error shall vanish before the light of truth, and the man whose conduct had been unjustly blamed in this world, shall be acknowledged by his gracious master as his *good and faithful servant*, with what rapture will that friendship be renewed which no doubts, no suspicion, can ever more disturb : while those whose tender attachment, founded on mutual esteem, and confirmed by continual proofs of reciprocal affection, had remained unshaken, even by that stroke of death which separated them for a time, will, when they shall meet in the heavenly mansions, look forward to the everlasting enjoyment of those blessings which flow from the indulgence of the social affections, and above all, from virtuous friendship. They will fear no interruption to their felicity ; for time, and all its attendant cares and sorrows,

* Psa. cxi. 10.

will be swallowed up in eternity, and perfect happiness will be their everlasting inheritance :

“ That holy calm, that harmony of mind,

“ Where purity and peace imingle charms.”*

Such an union supposes an assemblage on both sides of every virtue ; a fervent piety and stedfast probity, an extent, a delicacy of benevolence, and of social affections, which, without being able absolutely to conquer defects and weaknesses, induce us without difficulty mutually to endure and pardon them. The general effects of these dispositions and sentiments will continue for ever ; and why not then this particular intimacy, so similar to that which will unite every soul in heaven ? Will not a connexion, founded on the same basis as our eternal felicity, endure like that for ever and ever ? This pleasing hope constitutes here below the most soothing, the most solid consolation of those friends who are separated by death : it prevents this king of terrors, that terrible enemy of all those who live *without hope, and without God in the world*, from depriving us, by the very idea of his approach, of the transporting pleasures of friendship. We may believe that this sweet hope will not deceive us ; but that, like all the others which are founded upon the goodness of God, and upon what there is in ourselves most laudable, and most worthy of his approbation, it will never be destroyed, until *that*

* Thomson.

which is perfect being come, that which is in part shall be done away, and

“Faith be lost in sight, and hope in joy !”

The inequality of rank which we have reason to believe will be established amongst the glorified spirits, will not create envy or jealousy in our purified souls.* These odious passions arise only from a conflict of real or of imaginary interests, and from the abuse of a noble ambition, which is inseparable from an intelligent being. But a conflict of real interests will have no place in heaven; and imaginary opposition will, without doubt, be equally excluded from thence, for it proceeds only from our errors. With regard to that ambition which is natural to us, that constant desire to exalt and improve ourselves, we ought to cherish and encourage it; but when we direct that improperly, which is in itself so worthy of us, when we suffer ourselves to be governed by an extravagant and impetuous imagination, we persuade ourselves that the exaltation of another debases us, that his superior felicity diminishes our own; and, judging only by a foolish comparison, we imagine that to prevent others from equalling or excelling us, is to advance our-

* It appears from several texts of scripture, that a difference of rank prevails amongst the angels. See Rom. viii. 38. Ephes. i. 21. Col. i. 26. And the same difference between the blessed in heaven seems to be alluded to by our Saviour, Matth. xi. 11; xxv. 21, 23. Also, Luke xix. 17, 19.

selves, and that our happiness will be augmented, in proportion as theirs is diminished. These false and cruel ideas will not enter into the abode of the blessed; all will be rectified there, and the noblest sentiments will prevail in their utmost purity and lustre.

If envy were not totally eradicated from our minds, an equality of rank amongst the inhabitants of heaven would not prevent it from exerting its baneful influence: even if we were exalted far above all created beings, yet then the Creator himself would become the object of our envy, which, regardless of the height to which we had already attained, would still aspire to be supreme.

"Yet all his good prov'd ill in me,

"And wrought but malice; lifted up so high

"I 'sdain'd subjection, and thought one step higher

"Would set me highest."*

If in heaven we should be subject to envy, our felicity there would be infinitely more precarious, and frequently more imperfect, than that which we enjoy upon earth. The difference of degrees of dignity or pleasure here cannot be compared with that which we shall meet with there; or, in other words, the objects which we here regarded as objects of envy, will then be far more numerous and considerable.

There is generally in this world a balance of good

* Milton.

and evil, which reduces our several lots almost to an equality. In heaven, on the contrary, there will probably be degrees of rank infinitely varied. It is true that there will not be any real evils; but an envious man would create as many imaginary ills as he should find beings superior to himself, and imaginary evils produce real misery; since then envy would necessarily be productive of unhappiness, it must be excluded from those peaceable realms, where God has fixed the throne of his glory, and where concord and mutual affection will be amongst the principal sources and supports of the universal felicity. And therefore that odious passion, as well as jealousy, covetousness, and all which are connected with it, are so expressly, so strongly, and so frequently pointed out in the scriptures, as incompatible with that purity of heart which shall make us heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

In the presence of God, and amidst the angels and glorified saints, every one entirely free from these hateful sentiments, will be content with his lot; every one, will rejoice in the superior felicity of others. It belongs only to the heavenly virtues of humility and charity, to diffuse over our hearts, through all eternity, this admirable source of tranquillity and joy: we can form but a very imperfect idea of that treasure of happiness, that amazing variety of pleasures, with which this alone will enrich the mansions of immortality. One of my fellow-creatures makes a discovery which delights

him; I also enjoy it with him. Another, superior to us both, communicates to me some new augmentation of his grandeur and felicity; I participate in it in the same manner: thus I in some measure appropriate to myself all the happiness of heaven.

Here below, either because our generous sentiments are far inferior to those which we shall then possess, because the felicity of others as well as our own is too much blended with sorrow to claim great congratulations, or because that being too much occupied with our own affairs, and our own troubles, we can only receive slightly and transiently the agreeable impressions of an affectionate sympathy; those pleasures which we derive merely from our knowledge of the pleasures of others, are seldom very lively or very numerous. But these obstacles will cease in heaven: our hearts, purified and tranquil, having no other occupation than to indulge agreeable sentiments, will yield to them without reserve, and each of us shall enjoy the happiness of all the rest.

In this world there are few to whom we wish to display all the emotions of joy which we experience. Frequently we fear that our friends might find the subject frivolous, and enter into it with a degree of coldness and indifference which would give us pain; and if the person to whom we wish to open our whole soul, is much less happy than ourselves, we can scarcely avoid fearing that our lot might lead him to reflect upon his own, and might mingle

with his joy a secret mortification. We may suspect that he is capable of some emotions of envy, because we feel a consciousness that we are so ourselves. But such doubts can have no place in heaven. After what I have said, to enlarge upon each particular would be only repetition.

The people of China and Japan imagine that it is impossible for us to be perfectly happy, whilst we see others excel us in talents, and surpass us in felicity. To reconcile this idea with the happiness of heaven, they suppose that, by an agreeable illusion, every one will there persuade himself that he is more favoured and more happy than the rest.

This proceeds from an ignorance, or at least a very imperfect knowledge, of the wonderful effects which are produced by those two excellent virtues, which shine forth with such lustre in the gospel,—humility and charity. Into what absurd mistakes do they fall respecting true happiness, when they attribute it to illusion and deceit! And what should we gain by this ridiculous stratagem? We should destroy one of the most abundant sources of our celestial pleasure.

God has given me a being, he has given me a soul; he offers me a felicity which is sufficient to gratify it entirely. Shall I counteract this felicity? Shall I mingle bitterness with it, because I know that there are spirits susceptible of more extensive happiness? Far from complaining of this, I admire his goodness the more; I give him thanks with the

greatest sincerity for the blessings which he has bestowed on others; this gratitude constitutes a part of the very small return which it is in my power to make to him, for those he has bestowed on me. My thankfulness towards him, my benevolence and tender affection towards all the rest of the blessed, who love me perhaps even to a greater degree than I love them, are essential parts of my happiness. Shall I envy their glory or felicity, because it is superior to my own? Ah, rather, how should I rejoice to be able to exalt them still higher! But I do enjoy this divine pleasure; my sentiments augment their happiness. I exercise their sublimest faculties; that which inclines my heart towards them, animates and increases their affection for me; they exert their talents to please me; I afford them the delightful employment of endeavouring to become useful to me. Thus they are indebted to me for a part of that joy which arises from being *perfect in love*, as I am indebted to them for the gratitude and affection with which they inspire me.

This is assuredly the light in which we shall consider these things in heaven, and such the sentiments which will prevail there.

Then there will be no necessity for a concurrence of circumstances to form this delightful union of hearts: at the first meeting, at the first sight of an inhabitant of heaven, we shall feel a mutual attachment, and shall be *one heart and one spirit*.

In the immense regions of immortality my curio-

fity leads me to seek those who are unknown to me ; friends whom I have never seen. I arrive amongst them ; immediately all press around me, and every one endeavours to the utmost of his power to procure me pleasure. My satisfaction animates their zeal ; and their generous and tender joy is the most delightful source of mine. I meet every where with innumerable multitudes, but never with an enemy. All those who see me, immediately wish to add to my happiness ; it is their first idea, their prevailing inclination, their predominant passion. They know that my heart is inspired with the same sentiments towards them ; we give reciprocal assurances of affectionate attachment, and enjoy the delightful pleasures of virtuous friendship.

This sweet sentiment will be continually augmenting ; and what warmth, what delicacy, what wise and benevolent attentions, will be displayed to increase our mutual love, and to vary our mutual pleasures ! One of the occupations to which we shall apply with the greatest ardour, will be to discover, and turn to advantage, every thing which can promote and extend the happiness of others.

In the present state of things it is not possible to conceive the degree of tranquility, content, and pleasure, which will accompany that universal and reciprocal affection ; especially if we suppose it infinitely more animated, as well as more pure, than it could be here below, even if all mankind were perfectly virtuous ; and we must imagine that it

will be so, in consequence of the great superiority of our celestial dispositions, of the additional motives which we shall then have, and of the many favourable circumstances which we shall there meet with.

If any person doubts whether these admirable sentiments of fraternal love will prevail in heaven, and desires a confirmation of it from scripture, he may be easily satisfied. I shall not insist upon the proofs which reason alone affords. All that I have said of our social dispositions, of our natural affections, of the principal sources of our pleasures, and of our ideas of the infinite number of the inhabitants of heaven, offer these proofs at first sight to every attentive person; but let us consider what light revelation affords to confirm our conjectures on this interesting subject.

“After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds; and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”* “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men

* Rev. vii. 9. 15.

made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.”*

If it be alledged that these passages do not absolutely express the mutual affection of the blessed, yet they certainly imply it; and even without admitting these as proofs, we shall still find as many as are necessary. St. Paul, in the epistle to the Ephesians, strongly expresses this spiritual union, by a metaphorical allusion to an edifice, firmly founded, and elegantly constructed. “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God, through the spirit.”† In the epistle to the Colossians, he says, “Above all put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body.”‡ St. John says, “He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”§ And St. Paul’s admirable description of that charity which “never faileth,”|| comprehends all the sentiments which I have particularized.

* Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24.

† Ephes. ii. 13, 22.

‡ Col. iii. 14, 15. § 1 John iv. 8, 16. || 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

We may then conclude, that the social pleasures which we shall enjoy in heaven, will be uninterrupted and perfect; not producing that immoderate and impetuous joy which sometimes accompanies them here, and which is more frequently the effect of thoughtless levity, than the expression of real satisfaction; for true content is tranquil, and the most heartfelt pleasure serious; but our joy in heaven will be an eternal serenity, animated by the most delightful transports. No tumult, no confusion, none of that turbulent mirth which exhausts the spirits of those who feel it, and embarrasses and wearies those who feel it not; but an universal tranquillity, a sweet satisfaction; a joy, lively, yet calm: pleasures sensible and animated, but pure, and always accompanied with that amiable circumspection which a tender friendship inspires; sentiments exquisite and inexpressible, yet free from violence; sentiments which will impel us, not to introduce discord amidst the universal harmony of hearts, but to improve that harmony more and more, and to raise it to a degree of perfection, infinitely above the most enchanting image which the brightest imagination can trace. For we shall not "love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth."* "We shall have fellowship one with another, and our fellowship will be with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ."†

* 1 John iii. 18.

† 1 John i. 3, 7.

ON THE
HAPPINESS
OF THE
LIFE TO COME.

PART IV.

LET us now consider some of the celestial pleasures which we shall derive more immediately from our own reflexions, and from some other circumstances which I have not had an opportunity of mentioning, and which will greatly add to our happiness in heaven.

Memory is a kind of restoration of the past: when we feel, or foresee as certain effects of a distant cause, which no longer exists, this gives in some measure a new existence to that cause, and places it again before us. When this relates to an action which we have performed, and which it was in our own power to have avoided, the idea or recollection of that action is a present source of pleasing or of painful sentiments, according to the consequences of that conduct which we recal to our remembrance.

No situation can be more dreadful, than a state of misery towards which we have voluntarily directed our steps for a long time, and into which we have at length plunged ourselves. Whatever may be the torment which we endure, our greatest suffering consists in the reproaches of our conscience. And in the same manner, in a happy situation, at which we have arrived by attentions and exertions, full of circumspection, prudence, and assiduity, some of our most agreeable reflexions arise from self-approbation. The more difficulties we have surmounted, and the more dangers we have avoided, the more perfectly we enjoy the happiness acquired.

Such is our sensibility to what is proper and reasonable, that independently of the success of our actions, we feel pleasure or sorrow according to the conduct we have pursued. If we have done what ought naturally to bring upon us great misfortunes, as the loss of reputation, fortune, or health; and if, contrary to the common course of things, these misfortunes have not befallen us,—yet there still remains a severe punishment in our own breast; we are secretly ashamed of the esteem which the world expresses for us, we cannot help inwardly confessing that we have not deserved it; our possessions appear to us to be in some measure unjustly acquired; our health a blessing which we ought not to enjoy; at least we certainly do not experience the comfort and satisfaction which we should feel without these humiliating reflexions. And if, instead of losing

any thing, though we deserve to be deprived of all, we have on the contrary obtained rewards which were due only to qualities of which we have been entirely destitute, or to efforts which we have not exerted, we then profit with regret from the ignorance of our superiors, who, by exalting us, have perhaps been guilty of injustice towards a more worthy object. That reward, however great it may be, can afford us only inconsiderable pleasure, in comparison of what those who had deserved it would enjoy.

On the contrary, such is the power and influence of self-approbation, that it alleviates the greatest calamities. To be able to say with truth, "This is not my fault; I have acted with all possible prudence to avoid this misfortune; I have not departed from my integrity;" this disarms our sorrows of their sting, and almost converts them into comforts. So delightful is the pleasure of self-esteem and approbation, that when our misfortunes are the effects of our virtues, which sometimes happen amidst the disorders of the present world, then they change their nature and cease to be evils. Are we poor? Perhaps it is because we have restored to the right owners, though not compelled to it by the law, that wealth which our predecessors had gained by rapine and extortion; our poverty then becomes a treasure, of more value "than thousands of gold and silver."* If in the cause of religion or virtue we

* Psa. cxix. 72.

should lose friends or reputation, yet, “if our heart condemn us not, and we have confidence towards God,”* we may console ourselves for the loss of esteem and regard, with the soothing reflexions arising from a good conscience; trusting that He to whom all hearts are open, will in a future world, when the mists of error shall be dispelled, bring forth our “righteousness as the light, and our just dealing as the noon-day.”†

With what pleasure shall we reflect in heaven upon the various temptations we have resisted, and the numerous evils we have endured, in pursuing with fortitude and perseverance the path tending towards that felicity, to which we have at length attained. Thus delightfully shall we enjoy the past, and, all evil having ceased, “God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.”‡ We shall possess, without any abatement, the fruit of our cares and exertions; and that approbation of our own conscience, which on earth had seldom been greater than to afford us consolation in our calamities, shall become in heaven a pure and sensible pleasure; a pleasure which reason will no longer oppose, or humility condemn; for we are there no longer to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,”§ but to obey the call of our glorified Master:—“Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world.”||

* 1 John iii. 21. † Psa. xxxvii. 6. ‡ Rev. xxi. 4.
 § Phil. ii. 12. || Matth. xxv. 34.

More impreſt with the beauty of virtue than we were, or could be, here below, we ſhall not only rejoice in our ſelf-approbation, with regard to the paſt, but we ſhall anticipate this celeſtial pleaſure in an everlaſting futurity; for we ſhall be aſſured of preſerving it inviolate, and of augmenting it continually, through eternal ages. Upon earth, alas! we feel this pleaſure but very imperfectly. One day diſtinguiſhed by ſome great victory over our own heart, one day on which we can reflect with ſelf-approbation, is a truly valuable day, and may almoſt be compared to thoſe which we ſhall paſs in heaven. But through our negligence and weakneſs, theſe days ſeldom arrive; and even when they do, our joy is abated by ſome melancholy recollection of the paſt, and by the fear which it occaſions that the next day may reſemble thoſe numerous preceding ones, which have been ſtained with ſin. We can, therefore, form but a faint idea of that transporting felicity which will proceed from the conſtant ſelf-approbation which we ſhall enjoy in that illuſtrious aſſembly of ſaints, where our moſt ardent deſire will be to advance “from glory to glory,”* “unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fullneſs of Chriſt.”†

This boundleſs proſpect of happineſs will be enjoyed in perfect ſecurity. Here below the idea of our mortality, and of our ſubjection to corporeal pains, conſtantly accompanies us. We are ſenſible

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

† Ephes. iv. 1

every moment that some accident may arrive the next, to deprive us of the fleeting breath of life; and that however happily we may escape from the dangers which hover continually around us, yet in a short space of time we must necessarily become a prey to decay and death. Our occupations both of business and pleasure frequently lead us into perils; while terror and anxiety diminish our enjoyments, and intrude into almost every circumstance of life.

In heaven we shall no longer be subject to the wars of elements, or to those more terrible revolutions which arise from the passions of mankind, and bring in their train miseries and destruction; miseries more formidable, and destruction more frequent, than are produced by infectious diseases, ferocious animals, overflowing seas, or contending storms.

“ Fate, arm’d with thunder, fire, and ev’ry plague
“ That ruins, tortures, or distracts mankind,
“ And makes the happy wretched in an hour,
“ O’erwhelms you not with woes so terrible
“ As your own wrath.”*

The present state of things renders it impossible, even with the greatest care, to avoid misfortunes; and mankind are in general so indiscreet and inconsiderate, as not to reflect what evil their conduct may bring upon others. Is it surprising then, that,

* Armstrong.

even without enmity, we are continually crossing and clashing with each other, and that our negligence occasions various evils, which a small degree of prudence would have prevented?

“ Without misfortune, what calamities!

“ And what hostilities, without a foe!

“ Nor are foes wanting to the best on earth.

“ But endless is the list of human ills,

“ And sighs might sooner fail, than cause to sigh.”*

But even in this life misfortunes would be much less frequent, if mankind were united by that bond of mutual affection, which our Saviour earnestly recommends to his disciples as their peculiar distinction. “ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”† Such misfortunes cannot therefore have place in an abode where the tumults both of the natural and moral world will subside into peace, and we shall “ love our neighbour as ourselves.”‡

We cannot, perhaps, here below, form an adequate idea of the pleasure arising from perfect security. It is impossible to enjoy such a state on earth, and therefore we cannot acquire a just idea of the satisfaction and joy which must accompany the assurance of an absolute exemption from all danger. We are so far from being able to acquire perfect tranquility in this world, that, on the contrary, the moment we reflect on that which we do expe-

* Dr. Young.

† John xiii. 35.

‡ Matth. xxii. 29.

rience, it appears so ill-founded, that we immediately lose it, and can recover it only by ceasing to reflect. I am in health to-day, but am I certain that I shall be so to-morrow? The friend whose society is now so delightful to me, in a few days perhaps may be snatched from me by death. In short, if we were to meditate on all the probable dangers which threaten us every moment, upon what basis should we found our tranquillity? It is true, that many persons live without fear, even when they are threatened with various misfortunes, they are inattentive to the dangers which surround them, and this is frequently a real advantage; an advantage, which, if we did not all possess in some degree, our mortal life would be a state of constant suffering; and it is probably for this reason, that the Creator has concealed futurity from our view.

But the most fearless do not, neither can they, enjoy that rational tranquillity which proceeds from the conviction of being in a state of security which nothing can alter. Such a state is inconsistent with this life; and therefore it is evident that we cannot here enjoy that species of tranquillity, of which that state alone can be the source and foundation.

It is only by looking forward with confidence to a perfect and eternal state, that we can acquire real tranquillity here below. Notwithstanding our natural repugnance to pain, and every kind of adversity, such is the force of religion, that by her powerful influence we may conquer that repugnance,

whenever it would interfere with our duty : and we shall not only prove our religious courage when we are called forth to active exertions, but we shall possess the more difficult virtue of passive fortitude, which will induce us to submit with patience and resignation to every apparent misfortune, and even to rejoice in it. Then only can we enjoy a tranquillity in some measure resembling the felicity of heaven, when “ casting all our care ” upon Providence, in the full assurance that “ He careth for us,”* we build our confidence on this incontestable principle, that whenever God permits misfortunes to befall a virtuous man, it is only as the means of increasing his future happiness ; because that, according to the admirable arrangements of his wisdom and goodness, “ all things shall work together for good to them that love God.”†

In heaven, where pain and sorrow shall be no more, and “ death shall be swallowed up in victory,”‡ we shall feel a sweet security that every danger is past, and that we shall enjoy for ever those pleasures which are at the right hand of God : treasures immortal and immutable, “ eternal in the heavens, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”§

This perfect security is so necessary to our felicity, that without it the greatest blessings would become in some measure the source of misery ; and even the

* I Pet. v. 7.

† 1 Cor. xv. 54.

‡ Rom. viii. 28.

§ Matth. vi. 20.

more deserving they were of our attachment, the more afflictive would be the evil resulting from the possible privation of them.

In the world to come our desires will not exceed their proper limits; and the assurance that they shall be gratified will render them agreeable sentiments, without any mixture of impatience. I have already remarked, that, in order to enjoy a felicity suited to our nature, we must have desires: a situation without them would be insipid. That which renders them painful is the fear of disappointment, which always accompanies them here; and fear produces impatience. But if we could banish fear, obtain a perfect command over ourselves, and consider seventy years as an almost imperceptible portion of our duration, impatience then would cease; and such will be our situation when we shall arrive in the mansions of immortality.

There our desires, being always bounded by reason and virtue, will be always gratified: our love of pleasure will never be at variance with our sense of duty. Without doubt the principal aim of our application and exertions will be, to inform and improve ourselves more and more, and to embrace every opportunity of informing, improving, and rendering more happy, those of our *fellow-citizens in the household of God*, who may not have made so great a progress as ourselves, or to whom we can be in any degree useful. We shall joyfully sacrifice our own particular gratifications to our social and

generous sentiments, whenever circumstances, or our own affection and benevolence, require such a sacrifice ; and this will greatly heighten the pleasure which we shall derive from our noble and exalted sentiments.

Labour will no longer be necessary to procure us conveniencies and comforts. We shall neither *toil* nor *spin* : for we shall dwell in “ a city whose builder and maker is God ; ”* “ we shall be clothed in that fine linen which is the righteousness of saints ; ”† and we shall eat of those “ fruits,” and drink of “ that water of life,” which shall be “ in the midst of the new Jerusalem.” Our occupations will therefore only be calculated to promote our felicity ; but an attempt to particularize them would be absurd, since we are not sufficiently acquainted with the nature of our celestial sensations, the degree of our faculties, or the species of objects which we shall meet with in heaven. There are in nature innumerable mysteries which are impenetrable to mortal eyes, an infinity of wonderful connexions which our weak understandings cannot trace ; we shall then perhaps penetrate those mysteries, and comprehend those connexions.

We may frequently employ ourselves in contemplating the glories of our heavenly abode, which will doubtless afford an everlasting subject for admiration. St. John has given us, in the Revelations,

* Heb. xi. 10.

† Rev. xix. 8.

a sublime idea of the magnificence of that habitation, which will be, as he expresses it, “the tabernacle of God with men. The building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. There shall be no night there; and they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.”* This figurative description conveys to us, by metaphors adapted to our present conceptions, the most lofty ideas of the grandeur of that *holy city*, which shall be filled with *the glory of God*.

The noblest and most delightful of all our occupations will be, to praise and adore that gracious Being, who is the author and giver of every blessing. The angels and saints in heaven are represented to us as continually worshipping God, and ascribing unto Him “glory, and honour, and power.”† To some this perpetual adoration may appear wearisome; but how little do they understand those exquisite sentiments which arise from a continual meditation upon the felicity we enjoy, and an uninterrupted contemplation of that divine Benefactor from whom alone it proceeds. What transports of gratitude and love will fill our hearts, when we shall behold Him, who, having guided us with his “counsel” through the paths of time, has af-

* Rev. xxi. 3, 18, &c.

† Rev. iv. 8.

terwards received us "to glory"* in the mansions of eternity: having given us, "who were dead in trespasses and sins,† his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I shall not enlarge further on the nature of our celestial felicity, but conclude with a few general observations.

A situation far inferior to that which I have endeavoured in some degree to describe, would appear to many persons a paradise worthy of our desires. There are in the present life tranquil and happy moments: for example; when in a fine day, in the society of chosen friends, far from the dreadful din of arms, surrounded by objects which flatter the senses, our mind unembarrassed by troublesome affairs, and our heart free from reproach, we enjoy an innocent and interesting conversation; or when in a peaceful and pleasing solitude, meditating without restraint, according to the bent of our dispositions, and the nature of our inclinations, or amusing ourselves with some other favourite occupation, we possess those pleasures which are peculiarly adapted to our turn of mind.

Let us suppose an entire security, a freedom from the usual evils of this life: let us admit a variety of pleasures, but not surpassing in degree those which I have just mentioned; let us suppose also, (for this is absolutely requisite) that we had no promise, nor

* Psa. lxxiii. 24.

† Ephes. ii. 1.

even the least notion of another life infinitely preferable to the present ; we should then look forward with sweet satisfaction to the eternal duration of such a state.

Now, if it be true, that with the single advantage of absolute tranquility, that is to say, an exemption from all positive evil, and notwithstanding the impossibility of acquiring a proficiency in various sciences, as being incompatible with the present condition of human nature ;—if it be true that, in such circumstances, a succession of moderate gratifications but little varied, and which, at the end of a certain number of years, would be only repetitions of those pleasures which we had already enjoyed, could constitute a desirable paradise ;—what idea ought we not to form of those celestial regions, where the least of our pleasures will surpass the most interesting earthly joy ; where tranquility will be accompanied with an endless progress, and the assurance of success in our studies ; where we may expect varied and increasing enjoyments ; and where consequently, eternity, far from introducing disgust and languor, will add to our glory and felicity a more ample and more exquisite delight ?

The ancient heathen writers, and particularly the poets, have left us descriptions of their Elysian fields, and of the golden age. In the latter, simplicity of manners, innocence, peace, freedom from fatiguing occupations, a soil naturally fertile, and seasons mild and serene, constitute the greatest

charms of the description. In the Elysian fields, the same images heightened and improved, an exemption from the humiliating necessities of our mortal state, some pleasures adapted to our nature, represent to us another golden age, but in some measure refined. These fictions, though extremely defective, interest the most insensible hearts. If we purify them from the mean, the gross, and the imperfect, which must necessarily accompany the description of objects, too nearly resembling those with which we are acquainted upon earth; and if we add to them various advantages which the heathens either could not imagine, or could not represent in all their extent and lustre, for want of ideas, sufficiently sublime, of the Divinity and his designs,—these descriptions may perhaps be regarded as faint sketches of the celestial felicity in its commencement.

What the holy scripture tells us concerning the garden of Eden, and the state in which we suppose mankind would have been, if neither our first parents, nor their posterity, had sinned, presents a very engaging image; yet this cannot give an adequate idea of our future paradise:

“Far happier place
Than this of Eden, and far happier days.”*

Man here below, even in a state of innocence, and with the approbation of the Most High, could be

* Milton.

only in the infancy of his dignity and happiness. Man, though innocent would still be but man ; the earth would be but a garden ; though we should not be subject to death, we could not in this world enjoy immortality to that degree of which our nature would be capable. To confine immortals here below, would not be consistent with that unbounded love which the Almighty testifies towards his creatures : to enjoy a glorious and blissful immortality we must have been transported to some superior abode, or our present habitation must have been considerably improved, in order to be suitable to the purified nature of its inhabitants, when they were become equal unto the angels.

But the pleasures of our celestial paradise will not consist in a limited felicity, a small portion of joy, particles of happiness, (if I may be allowed the expression) of which we might form almost an adequate idea ; but in an unbounded joy, surrounding us on every side ; in a vast, an immense felicity, arising from pleasures innumerable and unlimited ; in the eternal emanations of the power and goodness of the infinite Author of all, and in the “ unsearchable riches of Christ ;” * our dwelling will be with God in boundless realms of bliss, and our society with innumerable multitudes of intelligent beings, continually advancing, as well as ourselves, in wisdom, glory, and happiness.

With such hopes, and such prospects, we may

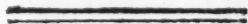
* Ephes. iii. 8.

not only “run with patience the race which is set before us,* but we may “go on our way rejoicing :† looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.‡” “Angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him.”

* Heb. xii. 1.

† Acts viii. 39.

‡ Heb. xii. 2.



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CONCLUSION.

To render this Essay more complete, I shall collect into one point of view, the principal objects of that glorious prospect which eternity opens before us, as a recapitulation and summary of my preceding observations and reflexions; and if any of them have in the smallest degree engaged the attention of the reader, when only separately considered, I hope, that when thus united, and reflecting on each other a more glorious lustre, they will produce a greater effect, and make a more forcible and more lasting impression.

In heaven, our glorified bodies will be no longer subject to infirmity or decay: all positive evils will cease. Our faculties, being perfected to a degree of which we can at present form no idea, will bring to the soul an endless variety of delightful emo-

tions. In the enjoyment of eternal youth and health, endued perhaps with modes of perception at present as incomprehensible to us as are the pleasures of vision to a man born blind, our senses will no longer be at variance with our reason: the corruptible body will no more press down the soul, but will be the instrument of its happiness. We shall enjoy the pleasure of acquiring and possessing knowledge, unallayed by any of those inconveniencies which accompany them on earth. Our faculties, talents, and assistances, will always be equal to the studies in which we shall employ them: a firm confidence of success in our inquiries and researches will make them so easy to us, that they will be productive of pleasure, unmixed with the slightest degree of fatigue; and being secure of an eternal duration, we shall not fear any impediment to our advancement in those sublime attainments, which will be the objects of our pursuit in the realms of immortality.

The Supreme Being will always be the principal object of our meditations. Here below we see him *darkly*; but then we shall see him *face to face*. The attributes of God, the wonders of creation, the conduct of Providence, the great designs of the Most High, and all those beautiful, sublime, and infinitely diversified objects in the contemplation of which we feel every moment the weakness of our earthly faculties, will be displayed before us in all their lustre.

At the sight of that immense store of pleasures,

of which God will have given us possession, our boundless admiration will be accompanied with the sweetest emotions of gratitude and love. By the recollection of the past, those evils, which can exist no longer but in our memory, will be admirably instrumental in enhancing the value of our happiness, and procuring us a more exquisite enjoyment of it. During this delightful retrospect, we shall look up to that Being, who is the *author and finisher of our faith*, with transports of gratitude and love, of which our most ardent sensations of piety on earth can give us but a faint idea.

From reflecting on the past, we shall naturally proceed to meditate on the future, and to enjoy the delightful anticipation of those degrees of glory and felicity which we shall not at first possess. Admitted into the presence of God, honoured by his approbation, we shall see in Him, and in every thing around us, the great system of universal felicity: a felicity for ever extending, and for ever increasing. God, who knows our hearts, will place objects before us to exercise our noblest virtues, in all their variety, delicacy, and ardour. Happy in ourselves, and in the happiness of myriads of our fellow-creatures, exulting in the prospect of an eternal augmentation of excellence and felicity, we shall enjoy these inestimable blessings with a warmth and energy of sentiment, which it is impossible to feel in this imperfect state.

We shall be secure of finding, in each of the bless-

ed, every disposition and affection towards us which can gratify our social feelings, and our natural desire to love and to be beloved. Strengthened by our progress in knowledge, in virtue, and in amiable sentiments; animated by the presence of our heavenly Father; free from all impediments; secure from all indifference; our affection for each individual of the blessed will be more ardent and tender, than that which we now feel for the most beloved friend: while we have the greatest reason to hope, that every tender and virtuous attachment formed on earth, if the object of it be really deserving of our esteem, will be renewed with augmented ardour, and be enjoyed for ever. No envy, no jealousy, can ever disturb our social happiness. Every one will be contented with his own lot, every one will sincerely rejoice in the superior exaltation of others; and thus we shall in some measure appropriate to ourselves all the happiness of heaven. At the first sight of a glorified spirit, we shall feel a reciprocal attachment, and shall for ever rejoice in the blessings of mutual love.

When we shall reflect on the numerous temptations we have overcome, and the various afflictions we have endured, in our progress towards that felicity to which we have at length attained, we shall enjoy the approbation of our own conscience; and that approbation which on earth had seldom been more than a consolation in adversity, will become in heaven a pure and delightful pleasure;—a plea-

sure which we shall anticipate in an everlasting future; for we shall be secure of preserving it inviolate, and of augmenting it continually, in the constant exercise of virtue.

All these blessings will be accompanied with the certainty that they are ours for ever. In heaven, where pain and sorrow are no more, and death is swallowed up in victory, we shall feel a sweet security that every danger is past: while futurity presents an endless perspective, a boundless field for the exercise of the noblest virtues, and the enjoyment of constantly increasing happiness.

Such are my ideas of the blessings of a future state. I flatter myself that I have not offered, under the sanction of the gospel, any propositions which are not either absolutely asserted, or clearly implied, in the sacred writings; and with regard to my conjectures, I have carefully endeavoured to hazard such only as, founded on the attributes of God, on the nature of things in general, and on the constitution and situation of the human race in particular, appear to be extremely probable. If I am mistaken in any of these ideas, yet I cannot err in recommending the encouragement of those sentiments which they tend to excite, and the practice of those duties which they are calculated to enforce.

Our life in this world is only a preparation for the next; a state of trial, and of discipline; in which we ought, not only to avoid as much as possible every action which is displeasing to God, but also

acquire virtuous habits, and a taste for every thing which is rational, amiable, and worthy of a being who aspires to become hereafter *equal unto the angels*. By this principle we may try the value of all our pursuits, of all our pleasures. If our intellectual and moral improvements in this world tend to the perfecting our felicity in that which is to come, it necessarily follows that our most important business here below, is to enlighten our understandings, and to improve our hearts; which may be as effectually accomplished by the active member of society, as by the sedentary recluse. Religion does not oblige us to renounce the common occupations, or the innocent pleasures of life. A proper attention to the former is often a great and important duty; and the latter are the flowers which Providence has scattered, in the narrow, and often thorny path of virtue. But let not the cares of this life engage our whole attention; let not pleasure be considered as our business. In a state which I have already called the infancy of our existence, our heavenly Father acts like a kind and tender parent; indulging us in every pleasure which is not contrary to our more important interests, but leading us to pursue such as will form our minds to happiness and virtue.

The father who consults the real good of his child, will cultivate his taste, his understanding, his virtuous affections, at the moment when he appears only solicitous to amuse him. The sports of infancy must

not be cruel ; they must not be such as feed the selfish passions, and counteract the great ends of education. Instruction may be united with pleasure, and reason may gain strength while fancy is amused. The tender guardian will never lose sight of the permanent advantage of his pupil ; the child must remember that he is born to be a man.

Such is our situation on earth ; and the comparison may give us a faint idea of the gracious designs of our heavenly Father. Since the bountiful hand of Providence has bestowed upon us innumerable blessings, and placed us in the midst of objects calculated to gratify our various tastes and inclinations, as far as is consistent with those great designs which regard our eternal felicity, we cannot surely render ourselves unacceptable to Him, when we enjoy with gratitude the gifts he has vouchsafed to offer us, or exult in the pleasing consequences of those virtues, which, by his grace, we have been enabled to perform. Let the rich and prosperous rejoice in the blessings which God has given them : the wealth which is spent in relieving distress, in encouraging science and virtue, or in promoting the innocent pleasures of society, and affording to a fellow-creature one agreeable hour, will not be lost. Whenever we contribute to the happiness of others, we cultivate sentiments which to all eternity will form a part of our own. Let philosophy extend its researches, let genius indulge the enthusiasm of a warm imagination ; all that is beautiful, all that is

sublime, in the productions of art, or the works of nature, all contribute to raise the mind to him from whom they immediately or ultimately proceed, and to fix the attention on those more glorious scenes, where alone real perfection can be found.

And ye, whose hearts are formed to feel the sweet emotions of friendship and benevolence, to you I address myself with peculiar satisfaction. Let not the cold maxims of unfeeling scepticism check your enjoyment of pleasures in which angels share. The example, the positive command, of the great Author of our salvation, calls us to love one another. "The charities of father, son, and brother,"* the tender ties of friendship, the warm philanthropy, "which scarce collective man can fill,"† all are the glorious fruits of that religion of which the distinguishing characteristic is charity. Fear not the sorrows which, in this state of trial, will be blended with the highest transports which the human mind is capable of feeling. The object of your tenderest attachment may be doomed to suffer, may be removed from you by death; even the Saviour of the world wept for his Lazarus, and all his disciples must be ready to resign every blessing they enjoy, when they are called to take up the cross and follow him. But these light afflictions are but for a moment: the friends who are parted on earth will again unite in heaven to part no more: the gentle heart, which now bleeds at the sight of human mi-

* Milton.

† Vanity of Human Wishes.

series, will there enjoy for ever the enchanting spectacle of universal happiness.

These are pleasures which reason does not blush to own, and which religion does not forbid us to enjoy: and shall we exchange these pleasures for follies which disgrace our understanding, and vices which corrupt our heart; which afford no real satisfaction in possession, and which must soon perish for ever? In a few years the delusive objects of vanity, avarice, and ambition, will lose their deceitful splendour; and all the glittering treasures, which are so often purchased at the expence of honour and virtue, will appear as contemptible to the poor wretch who now pursues them, as the toys which amused his infancy.

“Thrones will then be toys,
“And earth and skies seem dust upon the scale.”*

The Christian, whose faith is fixed upon the happiness of a future state, is prepared and enabled to support with unshaken constancy, and entire resignation to the will of God, the evils of the present life. The heaviest appear to him insignificant; the most lingering, but transient. Far from obstructing his progress towards the heavenly Canaan, they will advance and accelerate it. He submits, with religious patience and pious fortitude, to the deprivation of worldly comforts, while he trusts that he shall receive a recompence for them in the realms

* Dr. Young.

of perfect happiness. To arrive in those regions of felicity, is the principal, is almost the sole object of his desires. One step in the way which leads to heaven, is productive of far greater advantages than a thousand directed only towards the acquisitions and pleasures of this world. Those "treasures" which are "laid up in heaven," are the only "true riches."* To connect religion with every circumstance in life, to make it the companion of our gayest as well as our gravest hours, is to pursue the path which will conduct us to real and permanent felicity: it is to secure a present satisfaction, preferable to every other enjoyment our mortal state can afford. The least important, as well as the most material blessings proceed equally from God, and require our grateful acknowledgments; and we cannot truly enjoy any pleasure which we do not sincerely believe to be authorised by Him "who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."† The pursuit in which we cannot ask his protection must be criminal; the pleasure for which we dare not thank Him cannot be innocent. This habitual piety appears to be the proper offering of a Christian; who ought to be always employed in the service of God, and who fulfils his will, as much when he enjoys with gratitude the blessing he has given, as when he supports with fortitude the trials which are sent by the same all-gracious hand.

We are too apt to yield to indolence in virtue,

* Luke xvi. 11.

† 1 Tim. vi. 17.

and to negligence in piety ; which may be productive of the most fatal consequences. They are the most common, and at the same time the most dangerous, spiritual diseases of the sincere Christian. They insensibly lay the soul asleep, and that sleep threatens us with death. The most religious man requires frequent admonitions and precautions against those enemies of his soul. On this account St. Peter thus addresses himself to his fellow-Christians: “ I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance. Moreover, I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance.”*

Let us then exert ourselves with courage, with ardour, and an uninterrupted perseverance, to acquire all the glory, all the felicity, of which we can be susceptible in the life to come: “ forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,” let us “ press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”† “ Let us not faint ; but though our outward man perish,” let us pray that “ the inward man may be renewed day by day.” Then “ our light affliction, which is but for a moment,” shall work out “ for us a far more exceed-

* 2 Pet. i. 12, 13, 15.

† Phil. iii. 14, 15.

ing and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen, are temporal, but the things which are not seen, are eternal.”*

* 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18.

ON THE
IMMORTALITY
OF THE
S O U L.

TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN OF
ISAAC HAWKINS BROWNE,

BY
SOAME JENYNS.



B O S T O N :

PRINTED AND SOLD BY WILLIAM SPOTSWOOD,
NO. 55 MARLBOROUGH-STREET.

1796.

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Advertisement.

ISAAC HAWKINS BROWNE, Esq. the son of the Rev. Mr. Browne, vicar of Burton on Trent, was educated at Westminster school, from whence he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, and afterwards settled in Lincoln's-Inn, where he engaged in the profession of the law. In 1759 he published this Poem, *De Animi Immortalitate*, which was universally read, and as universally admired, not only for the choice and arrangement of the matter, but the purity of the language, which Lucretius himself would have acknowledged as a perfect copy of his style. Struck with the arguments, the disposition of those arguments, and the beauty of the expression, but above all with the bright contrast to the obscurity of the metaphysical poets of the last century; Mr. Jennyns was the first who translated it into English, and whose translation, as it was first in time, was also first in propriety and elegance amongst those with which the public was afterwards favoured.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Mr. Browne's happy vein in poetry placed him amongst the foremost of the art in his life time, the justice of which preference posterity will be enabled to determine, from a collection of his poems published in octavo, by his only son Isaac Hawkins Browne, Esq.—a mark of filial piety, one of the prominent features in his most respectable and amiable character.

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ON THE
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BOOK I.

To all inferior animals 'tis giv'n
T' enjoy the fate allotted them by Heav'n;
No vain researches e'er disturb their rest,
No fears of dark futurity molest.
Man, only man, solicitous to know
The springs whence Nature's operations flow,
Plods thro' a dreary waste with toil and pain,
And reasons, hopes and thinks, and lives in vain;
For sable Death still hov'ring o'er his head,
Cuts short his progress, with his vital thread.
Wherefore, since Nature errs not, do we find,
These seeds of Science in the human mind
If no congenial fruits are predestin'd? }
For what avails to man this power to roam
Thro' ages past, and ages yet to come,
T' explore new worlds o'er all th' ætherial way
Chain'd to a spot, and living but a day?

T

Since all must perish in one common grave,
 Nor can these long laborious searches save,
 Were it not wiser far, supinely laid,
 To sport with Phillis in the noontide shade?
 Or at thy jovial festivals appear,
 Great Bacchus, who alone the soul can clear,
 From all that it has felt, and all that it can fear? }

Come on then, let us feast: let Chloe sing,
 And soft Næra touch the trembling string;
 Enjoy the present hour, nor seek to know
 What good or ill to-morrow may bestow.

But these delights soon pall upon the taste;
 Let's try then if more serious cannot last:
 Wealth let us heap on wealth, or fame pursue,
 Let pow'r and glory be our points in view;
 In courts, in camps, in senates let us live,
 Our levees crowded like the buzzing hive:
 Each weak attempt the same sad lesson brings!
 Alas what vanity in human things!

What means then shall we try? where hope to find
 A friendly harbour for the restless mind?
 Who still, you see, impatient to obtain
 Knowledge immense, (so Nature's laws ordain)
 Ev'n now, though fetter'd in corporeal clay,
 Climbs step by step the prospect to survey,
 And seeks, unwearied, Truth's eternal ray. }

No fleeting joys she asks, which must depend
 On the frail senses, and with them must end;

But such as suit her own immortal fame,
Free from all change, eternally the same.

Take courage then, these joys we shall attain ;
Almighty wisdom never acts in vain ;
Nor shall the soul on which it has bestow'd
Such pow'rs e'er perish like an earthly clod ;
But purg'd at length from foul corruption's stain,
Freed from her prison and unbound her chain,
She shall her native strength, and native skies regain :
To heav'n an old inhabitant return, [urn.
And draw nectareous streams from truth's perpetual

Whilst life remains, (if life it can be call'd
T' exist in fleshly bondage thus enthrall'd)
Tir'd with the dull pursuit of worldly things,
The soul scarce wakes, or opes her gladsome wings,
Yet still the godlike exile in disgrace
Retains some marks of her celestial race ;
Else whence from mem'ry's store can she produce
Such various thoughts, or range them so for use ?
Can matter these contain, dispose, apply ?
Can in her cells such mighty treasures lie ?
Or can her native force produce them to the eye ?

Whence is this pow'r, this foundress of all arts,
Serving, adorning life, thro' all its parts,
Which names impos'd, by letters mark'd those names,
Adjusted properly by legal claims,
From woods and wilds collected rude mankind,
And cities, laws, and governments design'd ?

What can this be, but some bright ray from heav'n,
Some emanation from Omniscience giv'n?

When now the rapid stream of eloquence
Bears all before it, passion, reason, sense,
Can its dread thunder, or its lightning's force
Derive their essence from a mortal source?
What think you of the bard's enchanting art,
Which, whether he attempts to warm the heart
With fabled scenes, or charm the ear with rhyme,
Breathes all pathetic, lovely, and sublime?
Whilst things on earth roll round from age to age,
The same dull farce repeated on the stage;
The poet gives us a creation new,
More pleasing and more perfect than the true;
The mind, who always to perfection hastes,
Perfection, such as here she never tastes,
With gratitude accepts the kind deceit,
And thence foresees a system more complete.

Of those what think you, who the circling race }
Of suns, and their revolving planets trace, }
And comets journeying thro' unbounded space!
Say, can you doubt, but that th' all-searching soul,
That now can traverse heav'n from pole to pole,
From thence descending visits but this earth,
And shall once more regain the regions of her birth?

Cou'd she thus act, unless some power unknown,
From matter quite distinct and all her own,
Supported and impell'd her? She approves
Self-conscious, and condemns; she hates, and loves,

Mourns, and rejoices, hopes, and is afraid,
 Without the body's unrequested aid :
 Her own internal strength her reason guides,
 By this she now compares things, now divides,
 Truth's scatter'd fragments piece by piece collects,
 Rejoins, and thence her edifice erects ;
 Piles arts on arts, effects to causes ties,
 And rears th' aspiring fabric to the skies :
 From whence, as on a distant plain below,
 She sees from causes consequences flow,
 And the whole chain distinctly comprehends,
 Which from the Almighty's throne to earth descends :
 And lastly, turning inwardly her eyes,
 Perceives how all her own ideas rise,
 Contemplates what she is, and whence she came,
 And almost comprehends her own amazing frame.
 Can mere machines be with such pow'rs endued,
 Or conscious of those pow'rs suppose they cou'd ?
 For body is but a machine alone
 Mov'd by external force, and impulse not its own.

Rate not th' extension of the human mind
 By the plebeian standard of mankind,
 But by the size of those gigantic few,
 Whom Greece and Rome still offer to our view ;
 Or Britain, well-deserving equal praise,
 Parent of heroes too in better days.

Why shou'd I try her num'rous sons to name
 By verse, law, eloquence, consign'd to fame ?

Or who have forc'd fair Science into fight
 Long lost in darkness, and afraid of light.
 O'er all superior, like the solar ray,
 First Bacon usher'd in the dawning day,
 And drove the mists of sophistry away;
 Pervaded nature with amazing force,
 Following experience still throughout his course,
 And finishing at length his destin'd way,
 To Newton he bequeath'd the radiant lamp of day.

Illustrious souls! if any tender cares
 Affect angelic breasts for man's affairs,
 If in your present happy heav'nly state,
 You're not regardless quite of Britain's fate,
 Let this degenerate land again be blest
 With that true vigour which she once possess;
 Compel us to unfold our slumb'ring eyes,
 And to our ancient dignity to rise.

Such wond'rous pow'rs as these must sure be giv'n
 For most important purposes by Heav'n;
 Who bids these stars as bright examples shine,
 Besprinkled thinly by the hand divine,
 To form to virtue each degenerate time,
 And point out to the soul its origin sublime.

That there's a self which after death shall live,
 All are concern'd about, and all believe;
 That something's ours, when we from life depart,
 This all conceive, all feel it at the heart;
 The wise of learn'd antiquity proclaim
 This truth, the public voice declares the same;

No land so rude but looks beyond the tomb
For future prospects in a world to come.

Hence, without hopes to be in life repaid,
We plant slow oaks posterity to shade;
And hence vast pyramids, aspiring high,
Lift their proud heads aloft, and time defy.

Hence is our love of fame, a love so strong,
We think no dangers great, or labours long,
By which we hope our beings to extend,
And to remotest times in glory to descend.

For fame the wretch beneath the gallows lies,
Disowning ev'ry crime for which he dies;
Of life profuse, tenacious of a name,
Fearless of death, and yet afraid of shame.
Nature has wove into the human mind
This anxious care for names we leave behind,
T'extend our narrow views beyond the tomb,
And give an earnest of a life to come:
For if when dead we are but dust or clay,
Why think of what posterity shall say?
Her praise or censure cannot us concern,
Nor ever penetrate the silent urn.

What mean the nodding plumes, the fun'ral train,
And marble monument that speaks in vain,
With all those cares which ev'ry nation pays
To their unfeeling dead in different ways;
Some in the flower-strewn grave the corpse have
And annual obsequies around it paid, [laid }
As if to please the poor departed shade;

Others on blazing piles the body burn,
And store their ashes in the faithful urn;
But all in one great principle agree,
To give a fancy'd immortality.

Why should I mention those, whose ouzy soil
Is render'd fertile by th' o'erflowing Nile,
Their dead they bury not, nor burn with fires,
No graves they dig, erect no fun'ral pyres;
But, washing first th' embowel'd body clean,
Gums, spice, and melted pitch they pour within;
Then with strong fillets bind it round and round,
To make each flaccid part compact and sound;
And lastly paint the varnish'd surface o'er
With the same features which in life it wore:
So strong their presage of a future state,
And that our nobler part survives the body's fate.

Nation's behold, remote from reason's beams,
Where Indian Ganges rolls his sandy streams,
Of life impatient rush into the fire,
And willing victims to their gods expire!
Persuaded the loos'd soul to regions flies,
Blest with eternal spring and cloudless skies.

Nor is less fam'd the oriental wife
For stedfast virtue, and contempt of life:
These heroines mourn not with loud female cries
Their husbands lost, or with o'erflowing eyes;
But, strange to tell! their funeral piles ascend,
And in the same sad flames their sorrows end;
In hopes with them beneath the shades to rove,
And there renew their interrupted love.

In climes where Boreas breathes eternal cold,
 See num'rous nations, warlike, fierce and bold,
 To battle all unanimously run,
 Nor fire, nor sword, nor instant death they shun :
 Whence this disdain of life in ev'ry breast,
 But from a notion on their minds imprest,
 That all who for their country die are blest?
 Add too to these the once-prevailing dreams,
 Of sweet Elysian groves, and Stygian streams :
 All show with what consent mankind agree
 In the firm hope of immortality.

Grant these th' inventions of the crafty priest,
 Yet such inventions never cou'd subsist,
 Unless some glimm'rings of a future state
 Were with the mind coæval and innate :
 For ev'ry fiction, which can long persuade,
 In truth must have its first foundations laid.

Because we are unable to conceive,
 How unembod'y'd souls can act, and live,
 The vulgar give them forms, and limbs, and faces,
 And habitations in peculiar places ;
 Hence reas'ners more refin'd, but not more wise,
 Struck with the glare of such absurdities,
 Their whole existence fabulous suspect,
 And truth and falsehood in a lump reject ;
 Too indolent to learn what may be known,
 Or else too proud that ignorance to own.
 For hard's the task the daubing to pervade
 Folly and fraud on Truth's fair form have laid ;

Yet let that task be ours ; for great the prize :
 Nor let us Truth's celestial charms despise,
 Because that priests or poets may disguise.

That there's a God from Nature's voice is clear,
 And yet what errors to this truth adhere !
 How have the fears and follies of mankind
 Now multiply'd their gods, and now subjoin'd
 To each the frailties of the human mind !
 Nay, superstition spreads at length so wide,
 Beasts, birds, and onions too were deify'd.

Th' Athenian sage, revolving in his mind
 This weakness, blindness, madness of mankind
 Foretold, that in maturer days, tho' late,
 When time should ripen the decrees of fate,
 Some God would light us, like the rising day,
 Thro' error's maze, and chase these clouds away.
 Long since has time fulfill'd this great decree,
 And brought us aid from this Divinity.

Well worth our search discoveries may be made
 By Nature, void of this celestial aid :
 Let's try what her conjectures then can reach,
 Nor scorn plain reason, when she deigns to teach.

That mind and body often sympathize
 Is plain ; such is this union nature ties :
 But then as often too they disagree,
 Which proves the soul's superior progeny.
 Sometimes the body in full strength we find,
 Whilst various ails debilitate the mind ;

At others, whilst the mind its force retains,
 The body sinks with sickness and with pains :
 Now did one common fate their beings end,
 Alike they'd sicken, and alike they'd mend.
 But sure experience, on the slightest view,
 Shows us, that the reverse of this is true ;
 For when the body oft expiring lies,
 Its limbs quite senseless, and half clos'd its eyes,
 The mind new force and eloquence acquires,
 And with prophetic voice the dying lips inspires.

Of like materials were they both compos'd,
 How comes it, that the mind, when sleep has clos'd
 Each avenue of sense, expatiates wide,
 Her liberty restor'd, her bonds unty'd ?
 And like some bird who from its prison flies,
 Claps her exulting wings, and mounts the skies.

Grant that corporeal is the human mind,
 It must have parts *in infinitum* join'd ;
 And each of these must will, perceive, design,
 And draw confus'dly in a different line ;
 Which then can claim dominion o'er the rest,
 Or stamp the ruling passion in the breast ?

Perhaps the mind is form'd by various arts
 Of modelling and figuring these parts ;
 Just as if circles wiser were than squares ;
 But surely common sense aloud declares
 That site and figure are as foreign quite
 From mental pow'rs, as colours black or white.

Allow that motion is the cause of thought,
With what strange pow'rs must motion then be
fraught?

Reason, sense, science, must derive their source
From the wheel's rapid whirl, or pulley's force :
Tops whip'd by school-boys sages must commence,
Their hoops, like them, be cudgel'd into sense, }
And boiling pots o'erflow with eloquence.
Whence can this very motion take its birth ?
Not sure from matter, from dull clods of earth ;
But from a living spirit lodg'd within,
Which governs all the bodily machine :
Just as th' Almighty Universal Soul
Informs, directs and animates the whole.

Cease then to wonder how th' immortal mind,
Can live, when from the body quite disjoin'd ?
But rather wonder if she e'er could die,
So fram'd, so fashion'd for eternity ;
Self-mov'd, not form'd of parts together ty'd,
Which time can dissipate, and force divide ;
For beings of this make can never die, [sense lie.
Whose pow'rs within themselves, and their own ef-

If to conceive how any thing can be
From shape extracted and locality }
Is hard : what think you of the Deity ?
His Being not the least relation bears,
As far as to the human mind appears,
To shape, or size, similitude, or place,
Cloath'd in no form, and bounded by no space.

Such then is God, a spirit pure refin'd
 From all material dross, and such the human mind.
 For in what part of essence can we see
 More certain marks of immortality?
 Ev'n from this dark confinement with delight
 She looks abroad, and prunes herself for flight;
 Like an unwilling inmate longs to roam
 From this dull earth, and seek her native home.

Go then forgetful of its toil and strife,
 Pursue the joys of this fallacious life;
 Like some poor fly, who lives but for a day
 Sip the fresh dews, and in the sunshine play,
 And into nothing then dissolve away. }
 Are these our great pursuits, is this to live?
 These all the hopes this much lov'd world can give?
 How much more worthy envy is their fate,
 Who search for truth in a superior state?
 Not groping step by step, as we pursue, }
 And following reason's much entangled clue,
 But with one great and instantaneous view. }

But how can sense remain, perhaps you'll say,
 Corporeal organs if we take away! [decay. }
 Since it from them proceeds, and with them must }

Why not? or why may not the soul receive
 New organs, since ev'n art can these retrieve?
 The silver trumpet aids th' obstructed ear,
 And optic glasses the dim eye can clear;

These in mankind new faculties create,
 And lift him far above his native state;
 Call down revolving planets from the sky,
 Earth's secret treasures open to his eye,
 The whole minute creation make his own,
 With all the wonders of a world unknown.

How cou'd the mind, did she alone depend
 On sense, the errors of those senses mend?
 Yet oft, we see, those senses she corrects,
 And oft their information quite rejects.
 In distances of things, their shapes, and size,
 Our reason judges better than our eyes.
 Declares not this the soul's pre-eminence,
 Superior to, and quite distinct from sense?
 For sure 'tis likely, that, since now so high,
 Clog'd and unfledg'd she dares her wings to try,
 Loos'd and mature she shall her strength display,
 And soar at length to Truth's refulgent ray.

Inquire you how these pow'rs we shall attain,
 'Tis not for us to know; our search is vain:
 Can any one remember or relate
 How he existed in the embryo state?
 Or one from birth insensible of day
 Conceive ideas of the solar ray?
 That light's deny'd to him, which others see,
 He knows, perhaps you'll say,—and so do we.

The mind contemplative finds nothing here
 On earth that's worthy of a wish or fear:

He, whose sublime pursuit is God and truth,
 Burns, like some absent and impatient youth,
 To join the object of his warm desires,
 Thence to sequester'd shades, and streams retires,
 And there delights his passion to rehearse
 In Wisdom's sacred voice, or in harmonious verse.

To me most happy therefore he appears,
 Who having once, unmov'd by hopes or fears,
 Survey'd this sun, earth, ocean, clouds, and flame,
 Well-satisfy'd, returns from whence he came.
 Is life an hundred years, or e'er so few,
 'Tis repetition all, and nothing new:
 A fair where thousands meet, but none can stay,
 An inn, where travellers bait, then post away;
 A sea where man perpetually is tost,
 Now plung'd in business, now in trifles lost:
 Who leave it first, the peaceful port first gain;
 Hold then! no farther launch into the main:
 Contract your sails; life nothing can bestow
 By long continuance, but continu'd woe:
 The wretched privilege daily to deplore
 The fun'rals of our friends, who go before:
 Diseases, pains, anxieties, and cares,
 And age surrounded with a thousand snares.

But whither hurry'd by a gen'rous scorn
 Of this vain world, ah! whither am I borne?

Let's not unbid th' Almighty's standard quit,
Howe'er severe our post, we must submit.*

Cou'd I a firm persuasion once attain
That after death no Being would remain ;
To those dark shades I'd willingly descend,
Where all must sleep, this drama at an end :
Nor life accept altho' renew'd by Fate
Ev'n from its earliest, and its happiest state.

Might I from Fortune's bounteous hand receive
Each boon, each blessing in her power to give,
Genius, and science, morals, and good sense,
Unenvy'd honours, wit, and eloquence,

* With what original sublimity of thought and language was this argument enforced by Mr. Mason, in his *Elfrida*, before this Poem was published ! Athelweld, on his marriage with *Elfrida* being discovered to King *Edgar*, in the agony of distress intimates the dreadful purpose of suicide, from which the Chorus dissuades him in the following most beautiful lines,

—————Forbear, forbear !

Think what a sea of deep perdition whelms
The wretch's trembling soul, who launches forth
Unlicens'd to Eternity. Think, think,
And let the thought restrain thy impious hand,
The race of Man is one vast marshall'd army,
Summon'd to pass the spacious realms of time ;
Their leader the Almighty. In that march,
Ah ! who may quit his post ! when high in air
The chos'n Archangel rides, whose right hand wields
Th' imperial standard of Heav'n's Providence,
Which deadly sweeping through the vaulted sky,
O'er shadows all creation.

A num'rous offspring to the world well known
Both for paternal virtues, and their own :
Ev'n at this mighty price I'd not be bound
To tread the same dull circle round, and round ;
The soul requires enjoyments more sublime,
By space unbounded, undestroyed by time.

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BOOK II.

God then thro' all creation gives, we find,
Sufficient marks of an indulgent mind,
Excepting in ourselves; ourselves of all
His works the chief on this terrestrial ball,
His own bright image, who alone unblest
Feels ills perpetual, happy all the rest. [cree
But hold, presumptuous! charge not Heav'n's de-
With such injustice, such partiality.

Yet true it is, survey we life around,
Whole hosts of ills on every side are found;
Who wound not here and there by chance a foe,
But at the species meditate the blow:
What millions perish by each other's hands
In War's fierce rage? or by the dread commands
Of tyrants languish out their lives in chains,
Or lose them in variety of pains;

What numbers pinch'd by want and hunger die,
 In spite of Nature's liberality ?
 (Those, still more num'rous, I to name disdain,
 By lewdness and intemperance justly slain ;)
 What numbers guiltless of their own disease
 Are snatch'd by sudden death, or waste by slow de-
 grees ?

Where then is Virtue's well deserv'd reward !—
 Let's pay to Virtue ev'ry due regard,
 That she enables man, let us confess,
 To bear those evils, which she can't redress,
 Gives hopes, and conscious peace, and can assuage
 Th' impetuous tempests both of lust and rage ;
 Yet she's a guard so far from being sure,
 That oft her friends peculiar ills endure :
 Where Vice prevails severest is their fate,
 Tyrants pursue them with a threefold hate ;
 How many struggling in their country's cause,
 And from their country meriting applause,
 Have fall'n by wretches fond to be enslav'd,
 And perish'd by the hands themselves had sav'd ?
 Soon as superior worth appears in view,
 See knaves and fools united to pursue !
 The man so form'd, they all conspire to blame,
 And Envy's pois'nous tooth attacks his fame ;
 Shou'd he at length so truly good and great,
 Prevail, and rule, with honest views the state,
 Then must he toil for an ungrateful race,
 Submit to clamour, libels, and disgrace,
 Threaten'd, oppos'd, defeated in his ends,
 By foes seditious, and aspiring friends !

Hear this, and tremble ! all who would be great,
Yet know not what attends that dang'rous wretched
state.

Is private life from all these evils free ?
Vice of all kinds, rage, envy there we see,
Deceit, that Friendship's mask insidious wears,
Quarrels, and feuds, and law's entangling snares.

But there are pleasures still in human life,
Domestic ease, a tender loving wife,
Children, whose dawning smiles your heart engage,
The grace and comfort of soft-stealing age :

If happiness exists, 'tis surely here,
But are these joys exempt from care and fear ?
Need I the miseries of that state declare,
When different passions draw the wedded pair ?
Or say how hard those passions to discern,
Ere the dye's cast, and 'tis too late to learn ?

Who can insure, that what is right, and good,
These children shall pursue ? or if they shou'd,
Death comes when least you fear so black a day,
And all your blooming hopes are snatch'd away.

We say not that these ills from Virtue flow ;
Did her wise precepts rule the world, we know
The golden-ages would again begin ;
But 'tis our lot in this to suffer, and to sin.

Observing this, some sages have decreed
That all things from two causes must proceed ;

Two principles with equal pow'r endu'd,
 This wholly evil, that supremely good.
 From this arise the miseries we endure,
 Whilst that administers a friendly cure;
 Hence life is chequer'd still with bliss and woe,
 Hence tares with golden crops promiscuous grow,
 And pois'nous serpents make their dead repose
 Beneath the covert of the fragrant rose.

Can such a system satisfy the mind?
 Are both these Gods in equal power conjoin'd,
 Or one superior? Equal if you say,
 Chaos returns, since neither will obey;
 Is one superior? good or ill must reign,
 Eternal joy, or everlasting pain.
 Which e'er is conquer'd must entirely yield,
 And the victorious God enjoy the field:
 Hence with these fictions of the *Magi's* brain!
 Hence ouzy *Nile*, with all her monstrous train!

Or comes the Stoic nearer to the right?
 He holds, that whatsoever yields delight,
 Wealth, fame, externals all, are useless things;
 Himself half starving happier far than kings.
 'Tis fine indeed to be so wond'rous wise!
 By the same reasoning too he pain denies;
 Roast him, or flea him, break him on the wheel,
 Retract he will not, tho' he can't but feel:
 Pain's not an ill, he utters with a groan;
 What then? an inconvenience 'tis, he'll own:

What vigour, health, and beauty ! are these good ?
 No : they may be accepted, not pursued :
 Absurd to squabble thus about a name,
 Quibbling with different words that mean the same.
 Stoic, were you not fram'd of flesh and blood,
 You might be blest without external good ;
 But know, be self-sufficient as you can,
 You are not spirit quite, but frail and mortal man.

But since these fages, so absurdly wise,
 Vainly pretend enjoyments to despise,
 Because externals, and in Fortune's pow'r,
 Now mine, now thine, the blessings of an hour ;
 Why value then, that strength of mind, they boast,
 As often varying, and as quickly lost ?
 A head-ach hurts it, or a rainy day,
 And a slow fever wipes it quite away.

See* one whose councils, one † whose conquering
 hand

Once fav'd Britannia's almost sinking land :
 Examples of the mind's extensive pow'r,
 Examples too how quickly fades that flow'r.

Him let me add, whom late we saw excel
 ‡ In each politer kind of writing well ;
 Whether he strove our follies to expose
 In easy verse, or droll, and hum'rous prose ;
 Few years alas ! compel his throne to quit
 This mighty monarch o'er the realms of wit,

* Lord Somers. † Duke of Marlborough. ‡ Dean Swift.

See self-surviving he's an idiot grown!
A melancholy proof our parts are not our own.

Thy tenets, Stoic, yet we may forgive,
If in a future state we cease to live.
For here the virtuous suffer much, 'tis plain;
If pain is evil, this must God arraign;
And on this principle confess we must,
Pain can no evil be, or God must be unjust.

Blind man! whose reason such strait bounds
confine,

That ere it touches truth's extremest line,
It stops amaz'd and quits the great design.
Own you not, Stoic, God is just and true?
Dare to proceed; secure this path pursue:
'Twill soon conduct you far beyond the tomb,
To future justice, and a life to come.
This path, you say, is hid in endless night,
'Tis self-conceit alone obstructs your sight:
You stop, ere half you destin'd course is run,
And triumph when the conquest is not won;
By this the Sophists were of old misled:
See what a monstrous race from one mistake is bred!

Hear then my argument:—confess we must,
God there is, supremely wise and just:
If so, however things affect our sight,
As sings our bard, *whatever is, is right*.
But is it right, what here so oft appears,
That vice shou'd triumph, virtue sink in tears?
The inference then, that closes this debate,
Is, that there must exist a future state.

The wise extending their inquiries wide
 See how both states are by connexion ty'd ;
 Fools view but part, and not the whole survey,
 So crowd existence all into a day.

Hence are they led to hope, but hope in vain,
 That justice never will resume her reign ;
 On this vain hope adulterers, thieves rely,
 And to this altar vile assassins fly.

“ But rules not God by general laws divine :
 “ Man’s vice or virtue change not the design :”
 What laws are these ?—instruct us if you can :—
 There’s one design’d for brutes, and one for man :
 Another guides inactive matter’s course,
 Attracting, and attracted by its force :
 Hence mutual gravity subsists between
 Far distant worlds, and ties the vast machine.

The laws of life, why need I call to mind,
 Obey’d by birds, and beasts of every kind ?
 By all the sandy desert’s savage brood,
 And all the num’rous offspring of the flood ;
 Of these none uncontroul’d, and lawless rove,
 But to some destin’d end spontaneous move :
 Led by that instinct, heav’n itself inspires,
 Or so much reason as their state requires ;
 See all with skill acquire their daily food,
 All use those arms, which nature has bestow’d ;
 Produce their tender progeny, and feed
 With care parental, whilst that care they need ;
 In these lov’d offices completely blest,
 No hopes beyond them, nor vain fears molest.

Man o'er a wider field extends his views ;
God thro' the wonders of his works pursues,
Exploring thence his attributes, and laws,
Adores, loves, imitates th' Eternal cause ;
For sure in nothing we approach so nigh
The great example of divinity,
As in benevolence : the patriot's soul
Knows not self-center'd for itself to roll,
But warms, enlightens, animates the whole :
Its mighty orb embraces first his friends,
His country next, then man ; nor here it ends
But to the meanest animal descends.

Wise Nature has this social law confirm'd
By forming man so helpless, and unarm'd ;
His want of other's aid, and power of speech
T'implore that aid this lesson daily teach :
Mankind with other animals compare,
Single how weak, and impotent they are !
But view them in their complicated state, [great,
Their pow'rs how wond'rous and their strength how
When social virtue individuals joins,
And in one solid mass, like gravity, combines !

This then's the first great law by Nature given,
Stamp'd on our souls and ratify'd by Heav'n !
All from utility this law approve,
As ev'ry private bliss must spring from social love.

Why deviate then so many from this law ?
See passions, custom, vice, and folly draw !

Survey the rolling globe from east to west,
How few, alas ! how very few are blest !
Beneath the frozen poles, and burning line,
What poverty and indolence combine,
To cloud with error's mists the human mind !
No trace of man, but in the form we find.

And are we free from error and distress,
Whom Heav'n with clearer light has pleas'd to bless ?
Whom true religion leads ? (for she but leads
By soft persuasion, not by force proceeds ;)
Behold how we avoid this radiant sun, .
This proffer'd guide how obstinately shun, }
And after Sophistry's vain systems run ! }
For these as for essentials we engage
In wars and massacres with holy rage ;
Brothers by brothers' impious hands are slain,
Mistaken zeal, how savage is thy reign !

Unpunish'd vices here so much abound,
All right, and wrong, all order they confound ;
These are the giants, who the gods defy,
And mountains heap on mountains to the sky ;
Sees this th' Almighty Judge, or seeing spares,
And deems the crimes of man beneath his cares ?
He sees ; and will at last rewards bestow,
And punishments, not less assur'd for being slow.

Nor doubt I, tho' this state confus'd appears,
That ev'n in this God sometimes interferes ;

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Sometimes, lest man shou'd quite his pow'r disown,
 He makes that power to trembling nations known :
 But rarely this ; not for each vulgar end,
 As Superstition's idle tales pretend,
 Who thinks all foes to God who are her own,
 Directs his thunder, and usurps his throne.

Nor know I not how much a conscious mind
 Avails to punish, or reward mankind ;
 Ev'n in this life thou, impious wretch, must feel
 The fury's scourges, and th' infernal wheel ;
 From man's tribunal, tho' thou hop'st to run,
 Thyself thou can'st not, nor thy conscience shun :
 What must thou suffer when each dire disease,
 The progeny of vice, thy fabric seize ?
 Consumption, fever, and the racking pain
 Of spasms, and gout, and stone, a frightful train !
 When life new tortures can alone supply,
 Life thy sole hope thou'lt hate, yet dread to die.

Shou'd such a wretch to num'rous years arrive,
 It can be little worth his while to live :
 No honours, no regards his age attend,
 Companions fly ; he ne'er could have a friend :
 His flatterers leave him, and with wild affright,
 He looks within, and shudders at the sight :
 When threatening Death uplifts his pointed dart
 With what impatience he applies to art,
 Life to prolong amidst disease and pains !
 Why this, if after it no sense remains ?
 Why shou'd he choose these miseries to endure,
 If Death cou'd grant an everlasting cure ?

'Tis plain there's something whispers in his ear,
(Tho' fain he'd hide it) he has much to fear.

See the reverse, how happy those we find,
Who know by merit to engage mankind?
Prais'd by each tongue, by ev'ry heart belov'd,
For virtues practis'd, and for arts improv'd:
Their easy aspects shine with smiles serene,
And all is peace and happiness within:
Their sleep is ne'er disturb'd by fears or strife,
Nor lust, nor wine, impair the springs of life.
Him Fortune cannot sink, nor much elate,
Whose views extend beyond this mortal state;
By age when summon'd to resign his breath,
Calm, and serene, he sees approaching death,
As the safe port, the peaceful silent shore,
Where he may rest, life's tedious voyage o'er:
He, and he only, is of death afraid,
Whom his own conscience has a coward made;
Whilst he, who Virtue's radiant course has run,
Descends like a serenely setting sun,
His thoughts triumphant Heav'n alone employs,
And Hope anticipates his future joys.
So good, so blest th' illustrious *Hough** we find,
Whose image dwells with pleasure on my mind:
The mitre's glory, Freedom's constant friend,
In times which ask'd a champion to defend:
Who after near an hundred virtuous years,
His senses perfect, free from pains and fears,

* Bishop of Worcester.

Replete with life, with honours, and with age,
Like an applauded actor left the stage;
Or like some victor in th' Olympic games, [claims.
Who, having run his course, the crown of glory

From this just contrast plainly it appears,
How conscience can inspire both hopes and fears;
But whence proceed these hopes, or whence this
If nothing really can affect the dead? [dread,
See all things join to promise, and preface
The sure arrival of a future age!

Whate'er their lot is here, the good and wise,
Nor doat on life, nor peevishly despise,
An honest man, when Fortune's storms begin,
Has Consolation always sure within,
And if she sends a more propitious gale,
He's pleas'd, but not forgetful it may fail.

Nor fear that he, who sits so loose to life,
Shou'd too much shun its labours, and its strife;
And scorning wealth, contented to be mean,
Shrink from the duties of this bustling scene;
Or, when his country's safety claims his aid,
Avoid the fight, inglorious, and afraid:
Who scorns life most must surely be most brave,
And he, who pow'r contemns, be least a slave:
Virtue will lead him to Ambition's ends, [friends.
And prompt him to defend his country and his

But still his merit you can not regard,
Who thus pursues a posthumous reward;

His soul, you cry, is uncorrupt and great,
Who quite uninfluenc'd by a future state,
Embraces Virtue from a nobler sense
Of her abstracted, native excellence,
From the self-conscious joy her essence brings,
The beauty, fitness, harmony of things.
It may be so: yet he deserves applause,
Who follows where instructive Nature draws;
Aims at rewards by her indulgence giv'n,
And soars triumphant on her wings to heav'n.

Say what this venal virtuous man pursues,
No mean rewards, no mercenary views;
Not wealth usurious, or a num'rous train,
Not fame by fraud acquir'd, or title vain!
He follows but where Nature points the road,
Rising in Virtue's school, till he ascends to God.

But we th' inglorious common herd of Man,
Sail without compass, toil without a plan;
In Fortune's varying storms for ever tost,
Shadows pursue, that in pursuit are lost;
Mere infants all, till life's extremest day,
Scrambling for toys, then tossing them away.
Who rests of immortality assur'd
Is safe, whatever ills are here endur'd:
He hopes not vainly in a world like this,
To meet with pure uninterrupted bliss;
For good and ill, in this imperfect state,
Are ever mix'd by the decrees of fate.
With Wisdom's richest harvest Folly grows,
And baleful hemlock mingles with the rose;

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All things are blended, changeable, and vain,
 No hope, no wish we perfectly obtain:
 God may perhaps (might human Reason's line
 Pretend to fathom infinite design)
 Have thus ordain'd things, that the restless mind
 No happiness complete on earth may find;
 And, by this friendly chastisement made wise,
 To heav'n her safest best retreat may rise.

Come then, since now in safety we have past
 Thro' Error's rocks, and see the port at last,
 Let us review and recollect the whole.——
 Thus stands my argument.—— The thinking soul
 Cannot terrestrial, or material be,
 But claims by nature immortality;
 God, who created it, can make it end,
 We question not, but cannot apprehend
 He will; because it is by him endued
 With strong ideas of all perfect good:
 With wond'rous pow'rs to know and calculate
 Things too remote from this our earthly state;
 With sure presages of a life to come,
 All false and useless; if beyond the tomb
 Our beings cease: we therefore can't believe
 God either acts in vain, or can deceive.

If ev'ry rule of equity demands,
 That Vice and Virtue from the Almighty's hands
 Shou'd due rewards, and punishments receive,
 And this by no means happens whilst we live;

It follows that a time must surely come,
When each shall meet their well-adjusted doom :
Then shall this scene, which now to human sight
Seems so unworthy wisdom infinite,
A system of consummate skill appear,
And ev'ry cloud dispers'd, be beautiful and clear.

Doubt we of this ! what solid truth remains,
That o'er the world a wise disposer reigns ?
Whilst all creation speaks a pow'r divine,
Is it deficient in the main design ?
Not so : the day shall come, (pretend not now
Presumptuous to inquire or when, or how)
But after death shall come th' important day,
When God to all his justice shall display ;
Each action with impartial eyes regard,
And in a just proportion punish and reward.

1 NO 61

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